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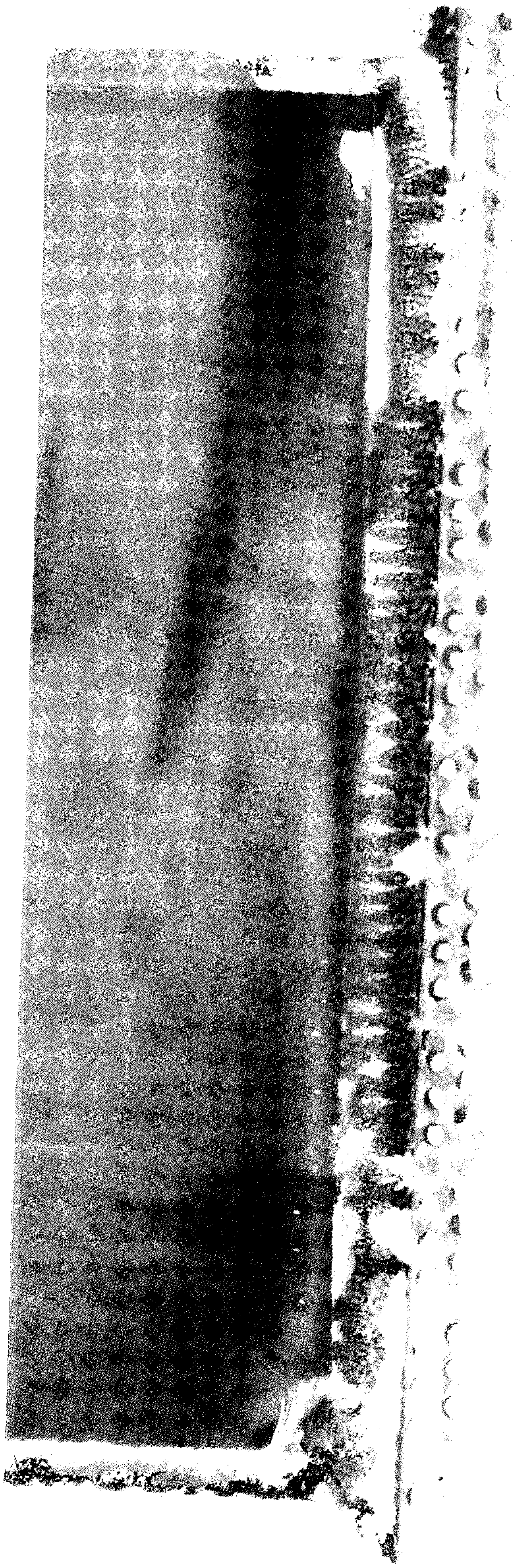

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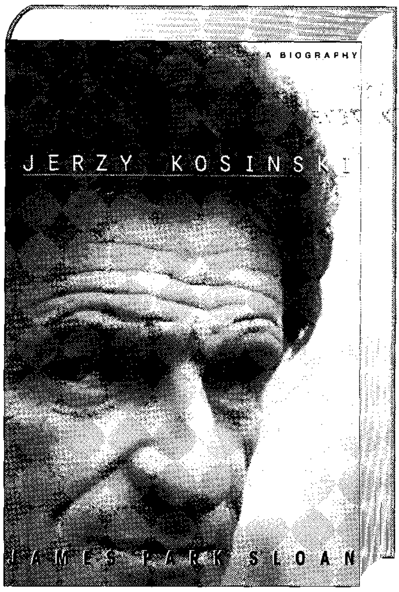

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THE NEW YORKER

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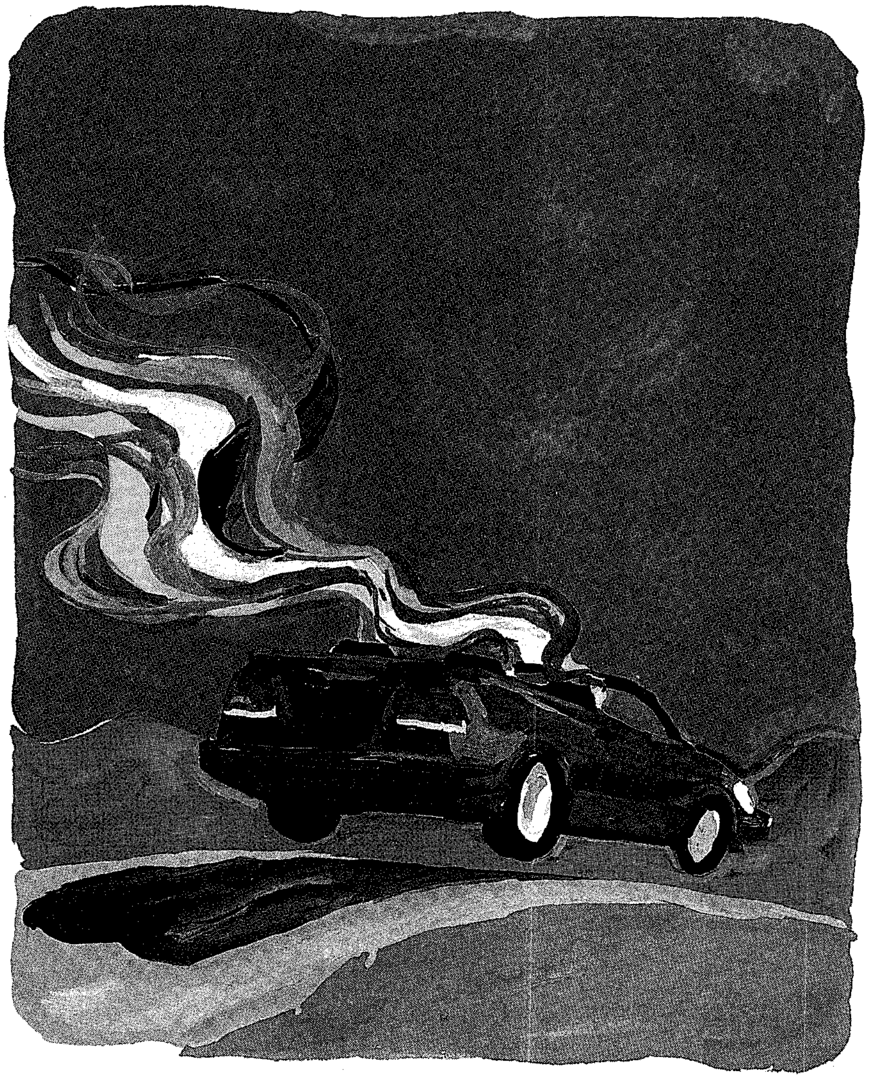

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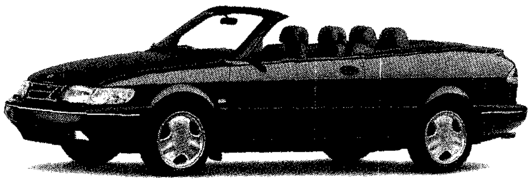

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THE TWILIGHT WAR

What the bombings signify, and what they do not.

IN Jerusalem a week ago, two long-bearded men in orange aprons stood on a high rooftop and scraped the face of a huge stone winged lion. The lion is one of the city's most prominent landmarks. The men were rabbis, members of a special unit whose gruesome job is to go into an area after a terrorist bombing and collect scraps of human tissue for burial, in accordance with the Jewish belief that the body is sacred and therefore must be interred with all its parts. Below, in the street, stood the charred skeleton of a No. 18 bus, destroyed by a huge explosion that scattered the flesh of nineteen people even to the rooftops.

It was a recurrent bad dream, for exactly a week before, half a mile away, another No. 18 bus had exploded, killing twenty-four passengers. Jerusalemites were stunned and grief-stricken, but they were not panicked. Their city is saturated with violence; the tension is apparent on every corner. In Jerusalem, repeated carnage is subsumed in continuous tragedy.

Then, one day later, the sky fell. A suicide bomber exploded himself in Tel Aviv, the ebullient, hedonistic underbelly of Israel, where Israelis feel more removed from the bloody conflict. The effects of the Tel Aviv atrocity were cataclysmic: if it could happen there, in front of a busy entertainment and shopping center, on the eve of the masquerade holiday of Purim, then surely Israel was fighting for its very existence.

The primal narrative of Israeli life is a narrative of survival. When a trauma of the magnitude of the latest bombings happens, it is instinctively woven into the fabric of Jewish history, with its grimly cyclical conception of time: "In every generation," the Passover Haggadah reminds Jews, "they rise to annihilate us." This interpretation was strengthened by the symbolic timing of the bombings. Purim celebrates Jewish deliverance from the evil plans of Haman, the Persian king's counsellor, who, according to the author of the Book of Esther, tried "to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews," and failed. The Jews "gathered themselves together, and stood for their lives, and had rest from their enemies, and slew of their foes seventy and five thousand." Purim's lesson is one not only of unity and redemption but also of revenge. Little wonder that Israelis understood the attacks in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv as a continuation of the "hundred years' war" against a Jewish presence in the Land of Israel, a new war of survival against an old enemy—"the Arabs."

Israel's political and military leaders did not challenge the public's angry rush to classify the bombings as a war of survival: on the contrary, fearful of seeming

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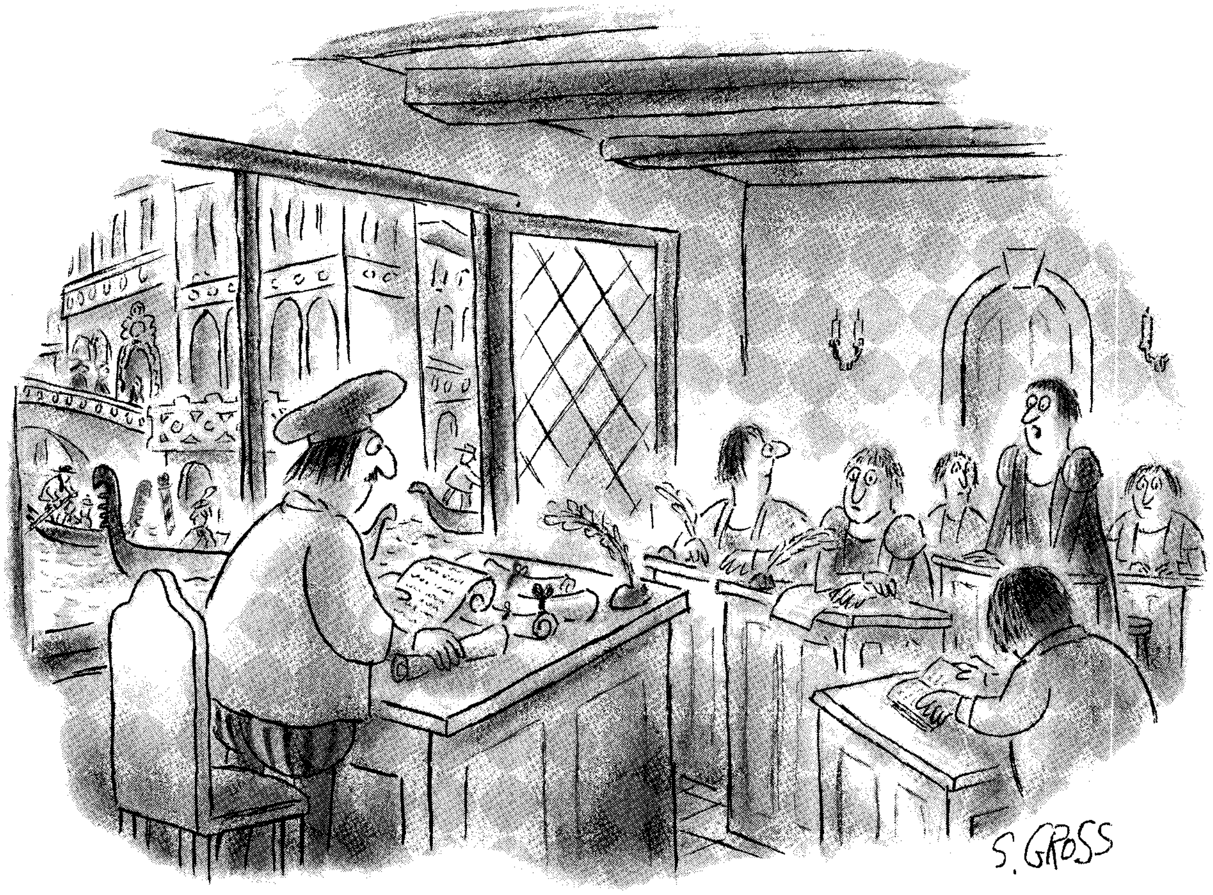
to trivialize the blood, suffering, and grief, they went along with it. Prime Minister Shimon Peres warned against "succumbing to emotions," but in the same breath he declared a virtual state of siege, for the duration of which "only one law is not nullified, the law of national security: it is lawful for a nation to fight for its existence, and this is the primary law I intend to respect." A war of survival is a total war. President Ezer Weizman, recognizing the difficulty of chasing individual terrorists, said, "When you look for a needle in a haystack and don't find it, sometimes you must burn the haystack." For Israelis, war is a paradoxically comforting category. Wars end. Wars solve problems and resolve ambiguities. And Israel's wars have all been short; most of them have ended in victory, and not one has ended in defeat.

Israeli political discourse always follows the pendulum of public emotion, and does so especially during election campaigns. Just a month ago, Shimon Peres felt secure enough to schedule early elections, following the national trauma of Yitzhak Rabin's assassination. The bombings struck Peres like a thunderbolt, for they threatened to make a shambles of Israel's agreements with the Palestinians. Now Peres must reconcile his declared war of survival with the peace negotiations, whose architect he is. Yitzhak Rabin used to say, "We shall combat terrorism as though there were no negotiations, and we shall pursue negotiations as though there were no terror." And Rabin was strong enough to do both, though the effort ended up taking his life.

Is Israel really facing a war of survival? Indeed, are war and peace even relevant categories in the Israeli context? What is happening in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv merits the name of a war of survival only if the terrorists constitute a threat to Israel's existence, and it is absolutely clear that they do not. The bombings are political, not military, acts. The danger they pose is not to Israel's survival but to a political process, and, notwithstanding the loss of human lives, the main damage they inflict is erosion of morale. Indeed, Israel's declaration of a war of survival constitutes a great achievement for the terrorists. Israelis have begun to realize this, and public sentiment is shifting: many Israelis, though not yet most, now see their initial panic as an embarrassing attack of neurosis.

So to call these bombings war is a category mistake. But, if the terror bombings are not exactly war, the goal of the "peace process" is not exactly peace. If for "the Arabs" war is not (or is no longer) an option, then for the Israelis peace (in the fullest sense) is not an option, either. The practical ramifications of Israeli-Palestinian coöperation—ceding territories, making complicated security arrangements, incurring economic costs—are too perplexing to provide catharsis. A clear-cut choice between war and peace is a privilege of societies luckier than Israel's. Israel may be destined to live in the twilight. Those who declare a "war of survival" miss the point, precisely as those who declare "peace now" express only pious hopes. Israel had to live with ambiguity, uncertainty, and risk when it was perpetually on the brink of war, and it will have to live with ambiguity, uncertainty, and risk when it is perpetually on the brink of peace. And, just as Israel found that a quasi-permanent state of military mobilization did not have to be incompatible with democracy, it now has very little choice but to accept the reality that the "peace process" does not guarantee, or even promise, the reconciliation and normality we usually associate with that noble and seductive word, peace. —Meron Benvenisti



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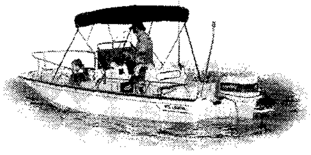

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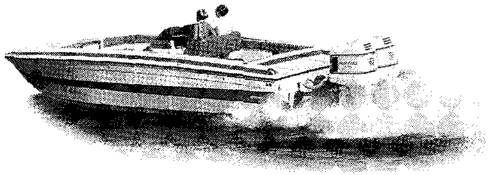

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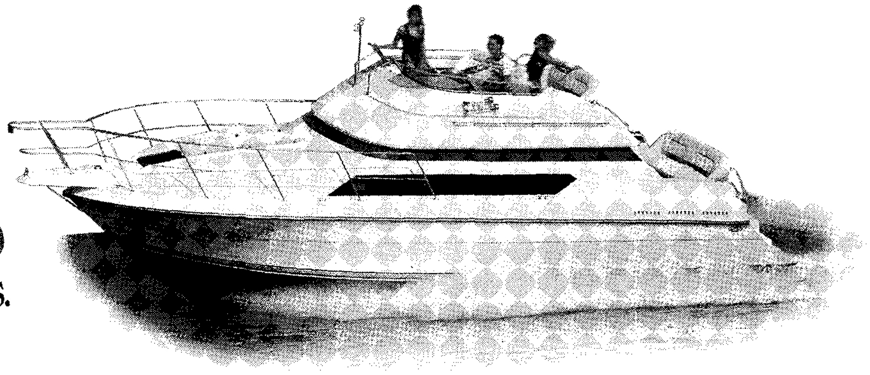

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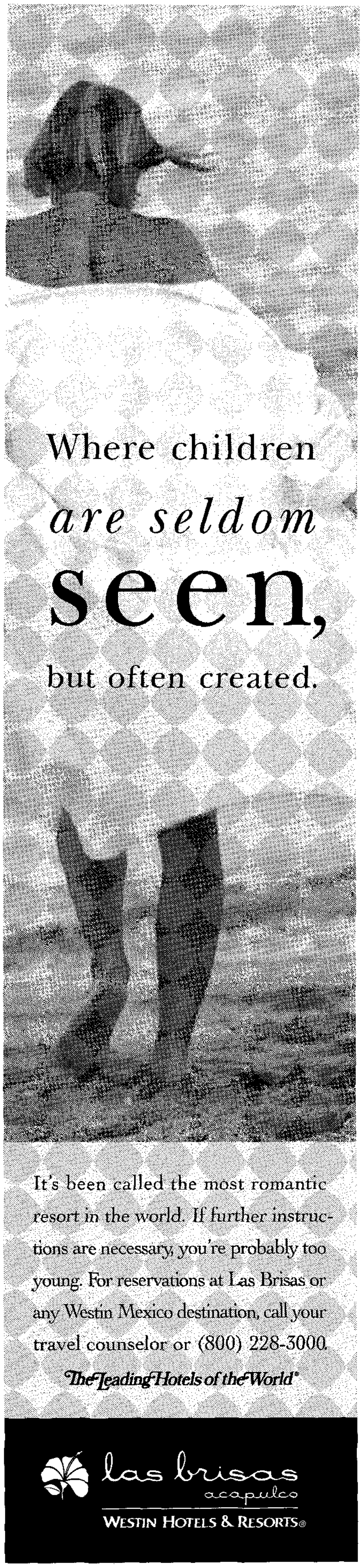

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SORE SPOTS

David Remnick, in his article about media criticism ("Scoop," January 29th), includes the *Columbia Journalism Review* in an offhand dismissal of "tepid" journalism reviews. He suggests that the opposite of "tepid" is the kind of press criticism that looks behind what appears in print or on television to the culture of the newsroom and the people who produce the news. Remnick goes on to enumerate topics—élitism, cynicism, political bias, laziness, and the "folkways and habits" of the press corps—as well as such trends as the "conceptual" scoop and "public journalism" that have been addressed frequently, thoroughly, and often for the first time in the pages of *C.J.R.* In the last issue, for example, Lawrence K. Grossman's authoritative investigation of CBS's self-censorship over fears of being sued for "tortious interference" is by any definition a model of journalism criticism.

SUZANNE LEVINE
Editor, *C.J.R.*
New York City

I am a reporter for a small daily that limps anemically from issue to issue. I understand David Remnick's point: we are not doing our job. Most newspapers belong to corporate-owned chains, and their executives are less concerned about the quality of the product than about profits. As long as money remains the measuring stick for the substance of newspapers, reporting will continue to be mediocre and more and more newspapers will be doomed to extinction.

LISA TURNER
Alamogordo, N.M.

LOOKS ARE DECEIVING

On my forty-third birthday, my copy of the January 29th *New Yorker* arrived, as did my son's *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit edition, which I tossed aside with a sigh. Thumbing through *The New Yorker*, I was stunned by the beautiful illusion / truth photographs of Las Vegas showgirls by Annie Leibovitz.

Later, when my twelve-year-old daughter was looking through *Sports Illustrated*, I told her, "You know, many of those photographs are just an illusion. I'd like to show you what real women look like." Leibovitz's photographs gave me an opportunity to talk over some important issues about beauty, illusion, and self-worth with my daughter.

DEBORAH SCAPEROTH
Knoxville, Tenn.

Several months ago, I saw Susanne Ofteringer's documentary "Nico Icon" and, like Hilton Als ("Femme Fatale," January 8th), was struck by the spectacle of Nico's gradual "dismantling" of her own beauty. What impressed me more, though, was that, of all the people interviewed in the film, only Nico's sometime collaborator John Cale had anything to say about the quality of her music. (He called it "European classical music.") It seems to me that the woman who chose a Garbo-like silence for herself also chose to break it on occasion by composing lyrics and music for many of the songs she sang. Perhaps interest in the facts and mysteries of certain artists' lives simply outweighs any interest in the work they manage to accomplish. Perhaps this is more often true of artists who also happen to be women.

LINDA SMITH
Baltimore, Md.

Letters should be as brief as possible, and sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number to "In the Mail," The New Yorker, 20 West 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. They may be edited for length and clarity.

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THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

Below the Belt—A new comedy by Richard Dresser, in which three businessmen (Judd Hirsch, Robert Sean Leonard, and Jude Ciccolella) play the corporate game together while based at an industrial compound in a distant land. Directed by Gloria Muzio. Two previews on March 13. Opens March 14 at 6:45. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

Bomber Jackets—A brief relationship between a gang member and a transvestite results in violence, in a new drama by Rob Santana, presented by the Puerto Rican Traveling Theatre. Performances are in English Wednesdays through Fridays and in Spanish on Saturdays and Sundays. Previews begin March 13. (304 W. 47th St. 354-1293.)

Brine County Wedding—Christopher V. Alessi portrays six gossiping Alabamans in his one-man comedy. Opens March 13 at 8. (WPA Theatre, 519 W. 23rd St. 206-0523.)

Call Me Sarah Bernhardt—The latest from Everett Quinton and the Ridiculous Theatrical Company. In previews through March 13. Opens March 14 at 7:30. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

Getting Away With Murder—John Rubinstein, Terrence Mann, and Christine Ebersole star in Stephen Sondheim and George Furth's new comic thriller. And it's not a musical. Directed by Jack O'Brien. In previews through March 16. Opens March 17 at 6:30. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			13	14	15	16
17	18	19				

Inherit the Wind—George C. Scott and Charles Durning go head to head in a National Actors Theatre revival of the 1955 drama about the Scopes "monkey trial." Directed by John Tillinger. In previews through March 17. Opens March 18 at 6:30. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6280.)

The King and I—Lou Diamond Phillips is the mulish monarch of Siam and Donna Murphy his children's English governess in a revival of the 1950 Rodgers and Hammerstein musical. Christopher Renshaw is the director. Previews begin March 16. (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

La Mama—March 14-16 at 10: "Jail Babes," starring the transvestite Tallulahs known as the Duelling Bankheads (David Ilku and Clark Render). Through March 23. . . . ¶ March 14-16 at 8 and March 17 at 3:30 and 8: "Interfacing Joan," written and performed by Louise Smith, as St. Joan; directed by Ping Chong. Through March 24. . . . . ¶ March 14-17 at 7: "The House of Nancy Dunn," a musical comedy about an Upper East Side serial killer, by Steve Weisberg, Andy Craft, and Howard Pflanzer. Through March 24. (74A E. 4th St. 475-7710.)

Mr. Budhoo's Letter of Resignation from the I.M.F.—Peter Schumann and his Bread and Puppet Theatre offer a new rendition of their political play. Opens March 13 at 7 and continues through March 30. (Theatre for the New City, 155 First Ave., at 10th St. 254-1109.)

The Night of the Iguana—Cherry Jones, Marsha Mason, and William Petersen star in the Roundabout Theatre's revival of Tennessee Williams's 1961 play. Directed by Robert Falls. In previews. (Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

Sabina—A new drama by Willy Holtzman, based on Aldo Carotenuto's book "A Secret Symmetry," about the relationships between Freud, Jung, and Jung's associate and lover Sabina Spielrein. In previews through March 18. Opens March 19 at 8. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052.)

Seven Guitars—August Wilson's new play, set in Pittsburgh in 1948, examines the final days in the life of a blues guitarist (Keith David). Lloyd Richards is the director. Previews begin March 17. (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

The Shattering—A drama about a family whose naïve support of a third-party presidential candidate brings about its collapse. Written by Mark Shapiro. With Robert Hogan and Marge Redmond. Previews begin March 15. (Players, 115 Macdougal St. 239-6200.)

The Size of the World—An eccentric New Jersey family alters a young man's notion of the American Dream, in a new comedy starring Rita Moreno, Frank Whaley, and Louis Zorich. Written by Charles Evered. In previews. (Circle Repertory Company, 159 Bleecker St. 239-6200.)

The Sun Dialogues—The Adobe Theatre Company presents a dark comedy by David Hollander, about an obsessed Hollywood script reader. Opens March 19 at 8 and continues through April 6. (46 Walker St. 560-7387.)

Tartuffe—Jean Cocteau Repertory presents Richard Wilbur's translation of Molière's 1664 comedy, which will run in rotating repertory with Shaw's "Major Barbara." Previews March 15-16. Opens March 17 at 3. (Bouwerie Lane Theatre, 330 Bowery, at Bond St. 677-0060.)

Working Title—A screenwriter tries to hold his crumbling career and marriage together, in a new comedy by Andrew Bergman. In previews through March 18. Opens March 19 at 8. (American Jewish Theatre, 307 W. 26th St. 633-9797.)

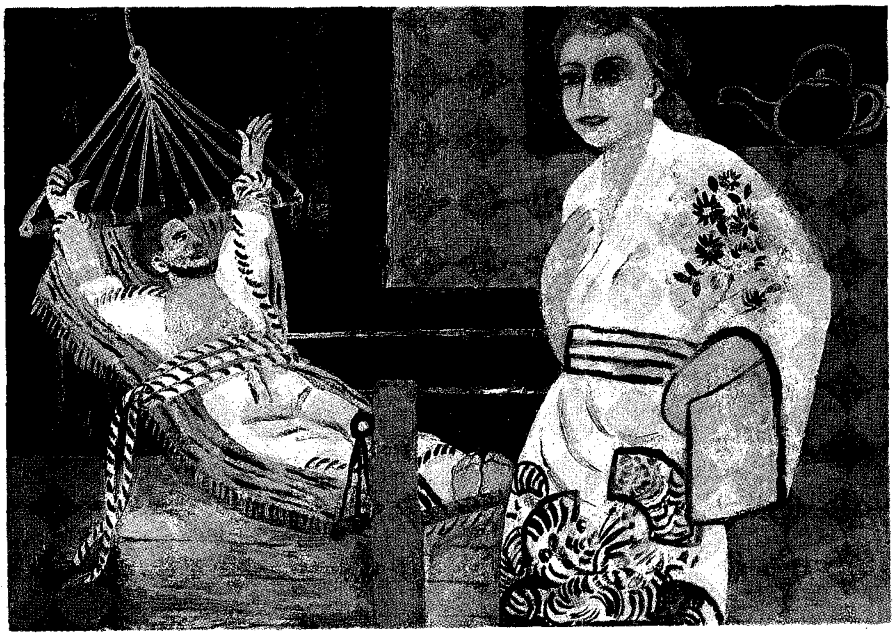
OPENED RECENTLY

The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria—The Spanish playwright Fernando Arrabal's 1967 comedy, about two men stranded on an island. Presented by the Independent Theatre Company. (House of Candles Theatre, 99 Stanton St. 353-3088. Closes March 16.)

Bein' with Behan—Dubliner Michael L. Kavanagh's one-man portrait of the boisterous Irish playwright Brendan Behan. (Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 22nd St. 279-4200.)

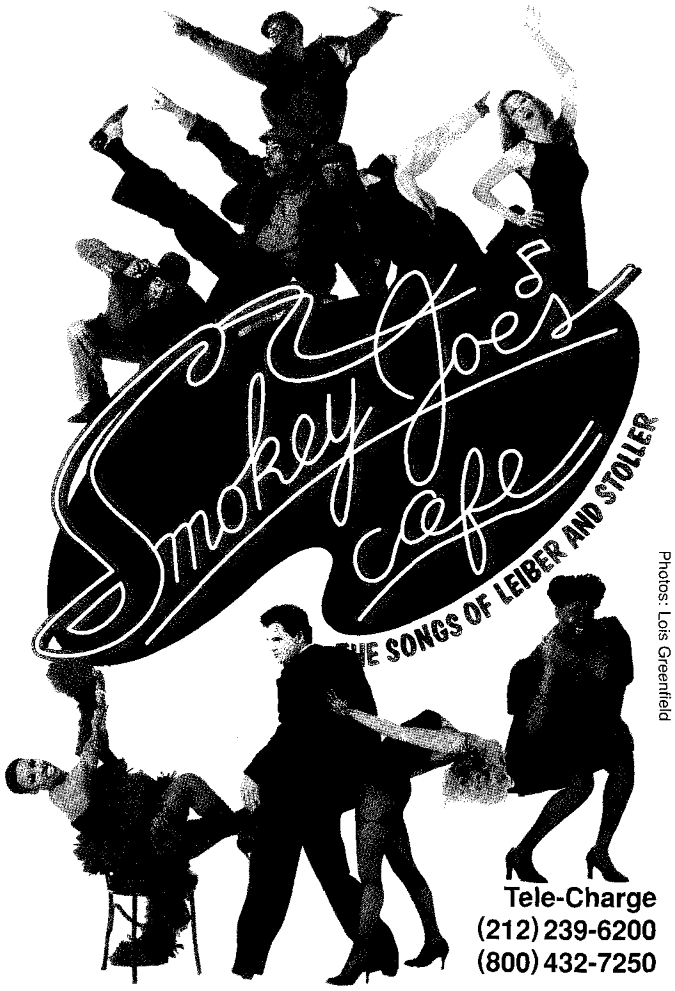
Blue Window—Under Joe Mantello's beautiful direction, Craig Lucas's well-written but slim 1984 play—about a party given by a nervous hostess and attended by six other young New Yorkers—seems almost substantial. David Aaron Baker and Allison Janney stand out in an excellent cast. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Closes March 24.)

Bus Stop—William Inge's 1955 play, which is set in a street-corner restaurant in Kansas and features eight "ordinary" people, was cornball when it was new; Josephine R. Abady's hyper-authentic, faithful production turns it into caramelized corn. But the play does provide some chewy parts for actors. Billy Crudup is touching, in a little-boy sort of way, as a naïve cowboy from Montana, but Mary-Louise



William Petersen and Cherry Jones, in "The Night of the Iguana."

FY IONES


Smokey Joe's cafe
The Songs of Leiber and Stoller
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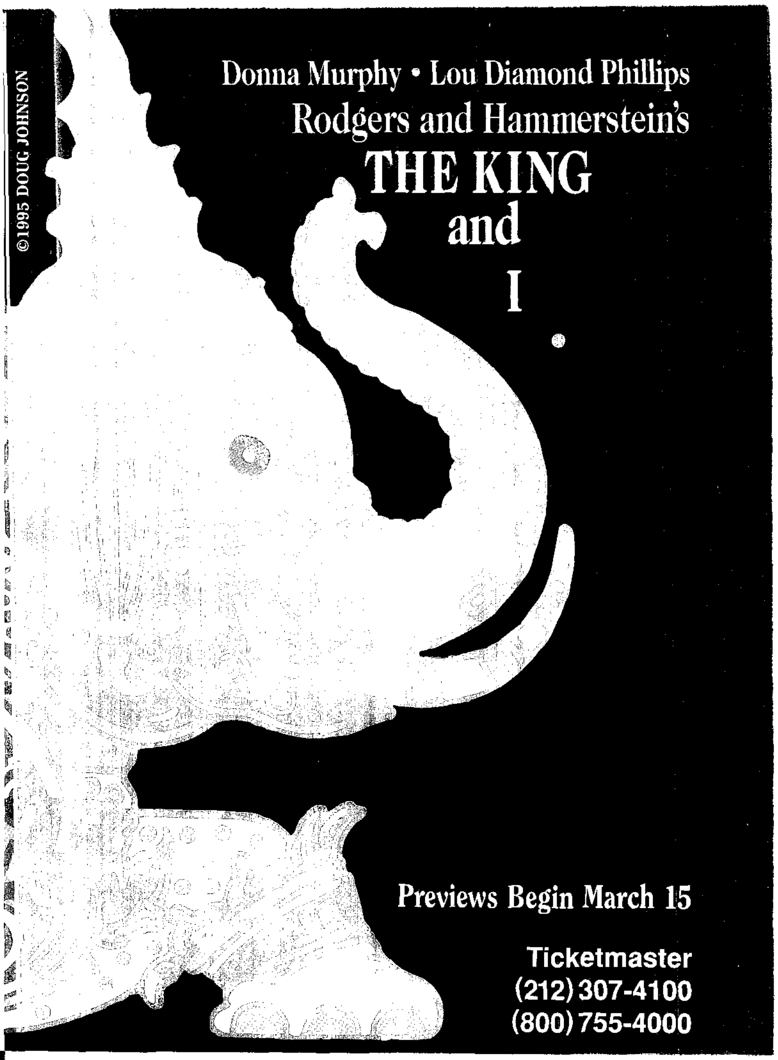
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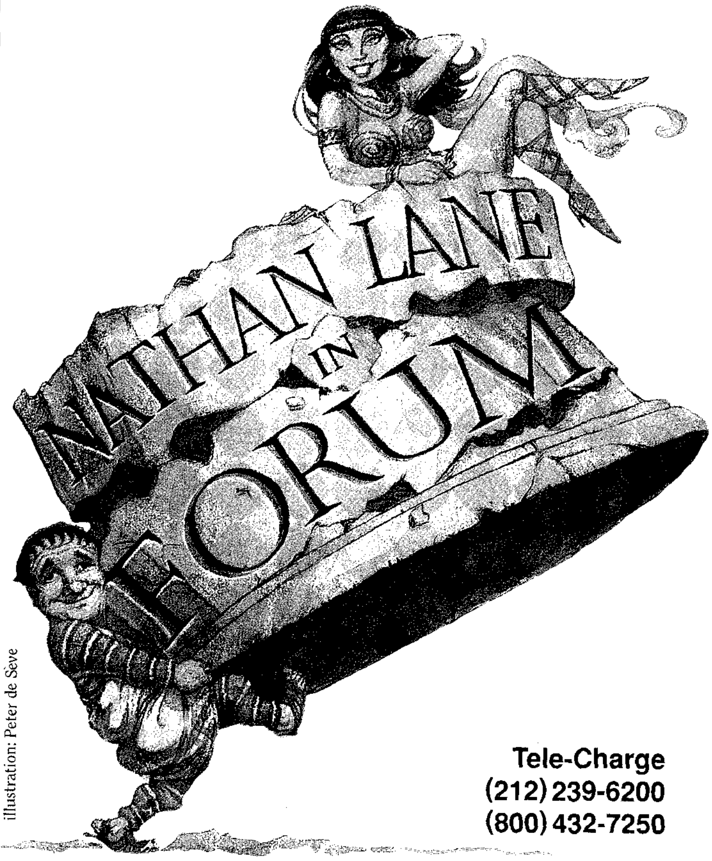
NATHAN LANE
IN
FORUM
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Parker is a blurry cartoon of bruised female romantic expectations. As usual in Inge, the older characters are more compelling, and Kelly Bishop, as a waitress of a certain age, and Larry Pine, as a cowboy of a certain age, bring real grace and a real pulse to their disappointed, worn-out characters—their roughened surfaces give you something to hold on to. (Reviewed in our issue of 3/11/96.) (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200. Closes March 17.)

Dancing on Her Knees—Nilo Cruz's magic-realist confection—in which a feisty drag queen (Luis Antonio Ramos) trying to summon back her dead lover calls up a Punch-and-Judy pair of tango artists (Paul Calderon and Franca Barchiesi)—is a satisfying if somewhat bombastic farce. Thanks to the talent of Calderon and Barchiesi, the production reaches another level entirely in the shimmering dance numbers. Directed by Graciela Daniele. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400. Closes March 17.)

Entertaining Mr. Sloane—The Classic Stage Company's vivid revival of Joe Orton's 1964 black farce is delicious in every way: the set and the costumes are spot on, and the entire cast turns in terrific performances—especially Ellen Parker and Brian Murray, as the sister and brother whose lascivious actions toward their overripe young boarder, Mr. Sloane (Neil Maffin), speak much louder than their virtuous words. Also with George Hall. David Esbjornson directed. (136 E. 13th St. 677-4210. Closes March 24.)

A Fair Country—In John Robin Baitz's new play, the personal and the political are inextricably bound up in the plight of the family of an American diplomat in South Africa and The Hague. Laurence Luckinbill, as the well-meaning liberal Harry Burgess (that surname, with its echo of betrayal, is no accident), sets in motion an unseen but horrifying course of events when he takes steps to keep his family from disintegrating. Thematically, the play, directed by Daniel Sullivan, is a very neat package, but emotionally it rings hollow, and it isn't helped by uneven performances from Judith Ivey, Matt McGrath, and Dan Futterman. The set, however, marks yet another triumph for the ever resourceful Tony Walton. (3/11/96) (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

Floyd Collins—A compelling new American musical, in the naturalistic style of a ballad folk opera, that takes off from the true story of Floyd Collins, a spelunker whose sixteen-day entrapment in a Kentucky cave in 1925 sparked a massive rescue operation and one of the country's first media circuses. Adam Guettel has supplied haunting melodies and poetically down-to-earth lyrics; Tina Landau wrote the book and also did the lucid staging. As Floyd, Christopher Innvar has a face like hewn rock; the rest of the fine cast harmonizes beautifully with the eight-piece countrified orchestra. The wooden-plank set, backlit tableaux, and period-perfect costumes evoke a photojournalistic dream turned nightmare. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200. Closes March 24.)

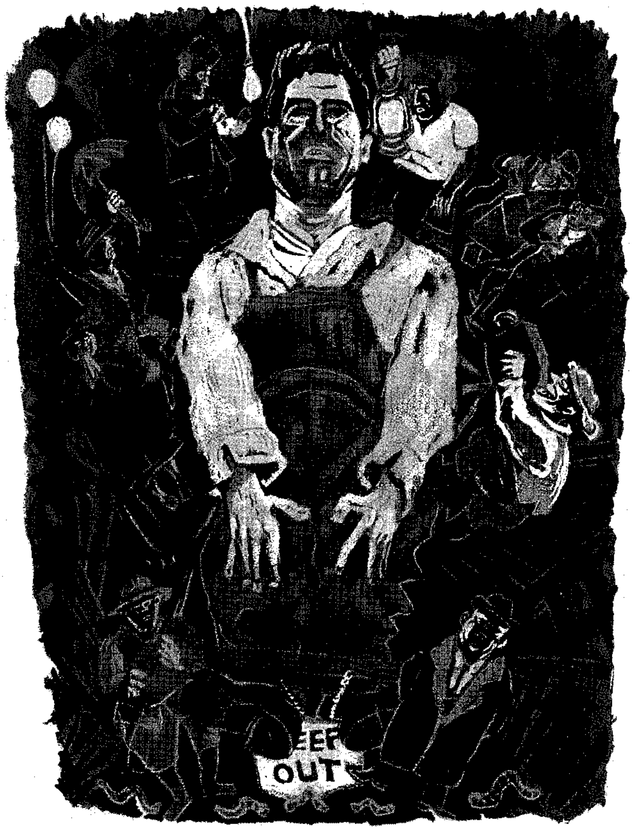
Forbidden Hollywood—Gerard Alessandrini takes aim at the West Coast Babylon in this new musical satire. (Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 799-4599.)

The Green Bird—Theatre for a New Audience's production of Carlo Gozzi's fantastic tale, directed by Julie Taymor, with original music by Elliot Goldenthal. For adults and children ages twelve and up. (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. Closes March 24.)

Master Class—Zoe Caldwell portrays Maria Callas with steely, divaesque conviction in Terrence McNally's latest play, but the role is merely the sum of all the clichés that have been in circulation for years; the Callas who was a consummate professional and an inspired teacher—and a human being—is missing. Leonard Foglia directed. (11/27/95) (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Mrs. Klein—Two London psychoanalysts—the famous Melanie Klein (Uta Hagen) and her less renowned daughter, Melitta (Laila Robins)—face off in a murderous argument and proceed to browbeat each other with theory in Nicholas Wright's smart though schematic drama. Robins is excellent; Hagen is brilliant. (11/20/95) (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

Molly Sweeney—Brian Friel's 1994 play owes much to an Oliver Sacks case study, but Friel didn't reimagine the material, and the play, which he directed, comes across as a staged reading of an essay. (1/29/96) (Laura Pels, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)



"Floyd Collins," at Playwrights Horizons.

Moon Over Buffalo—Carol Burnett and Philip Bosco are on a brief hiatus from Ken Ludwig's farce. Lynn Redgrave and Robert Goulet take over until they return, on April 17. Tom Moore directed. (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Nixon's Nixon—Russell Lees's play, which is set during a secret meeting on the night before the President's resignation, has reopened at an Off Broadway theatre. With Gerry Bamman as Nixon and Steve Mellor as Kissinger. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 315-2244.)

Overtime—A. R. Gurney's comic sequel to "The Merchant of Venice." (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

Picasso at the Lapin Agile—Set in a Paris bar in 1904, Steve Martin's comedy features Einstein and Picasso sittin' around talkin' about how they're going to change the world. It contains a satisfying amount of Martin's coolly absurdist humor—but there's a certain sourness to the proceedings which may put you off. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 239-6200.)

Rent—Inspired by Puccini's "La Bohème," the late Jonathan Larson's rock opera, set in a gray and dishevelled East Village loft space, stands every assumption of the traditional musical on its head. No such work could support so much narrative overload (eight separate stories are told), yet by the end of the evening, Larson's talent has taken the audience to places where the musical never ventures these days. (2/19/96) (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 460-5475. The play closes here on March 31. It moves to Broadway's Nederlander Theatre on April 16.)

Scenes from an Execution—Playwright Howard Barker's rough-and-tumble portrait of the Venetian artist as lusty middle-aged heroine. Galactia (Naomi Jacobson) is a sixteenth-century Mapplethorpe commissioned by the state to paint a triumphant naval battle, but she rocks the Renaissance establishment with her flesh-and-blood realism. Barker's intellectual and linguistic rigor is relentless, and the performances—especially by Jacobson as the primal genius, Greg Naughton as her cheek-turning lover, and Alex Draper as the epicurean Doge—are densely textured marvels. The assured direction is by Richard Romagnoli. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 239-6200. Closes March 17.)

Sleep Deprivation Chamber—The son of an African-American playwright is brutalized by a policeman, who then charges the young man with assault and battery. The Signature Theatre Company's playwright-in-residence, Adrienne Kennedy, and her son Adam based this joint effort on an actual event. The villains are, understandably, thickheaded and one-dimensional, and you can forgive the mother for sounding put-upon from start to finish. But why on earth did the writers put a dream sequence in the middle of the climactic trial, with the son popping out of an upstage grave and shaking Yorick's skull? (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400. Closes March 24.)

Spoke Man—A one-man show by John Hockenberry, about his adventures reporting the news—for National Public Radio and for television—from a wheelchair. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200. Closes March 24.)

The Universe—Richard Foreman and the Ontological-Hysteric Theatre's latest mind-wrenching vaudeville. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 533-4650. Closes March 31.)

Victor/Victoria—Julie Andrews, Tony Roberts, and Michael Nouri star in a theatrical version of the 1982 movie. The score (by Henry Mancini) is generic, and the book (by Blake Edwards, who also directed) is patchwork. Ms. Andrews will not be in the March 13 show. (11/20/95) (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.)

Virgins and Other Myths—Colin Martin's one-man show—a sort of "This Gay Boy's Life"—is an explicit though graceful dive into the depths of his own psyche. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052. Closes March 31.)

A Whistle in the Dark—David Leary is electric as the patriarch of a clan of Irish brawlers in early-sixties England. Frightened by his own failure, this man has taught his sons that the only way to live is to fight—everywhere, all the time—a philosophy that leads to tragedy when one son questions it. Thomas Murphy's 1961 play begins slowly, but the acting is solid throughout, and Mr. Leary is a charismatic center of attention long before his character's malignity becomes clear. Directed by Charlotte Moore. (132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737. Closes March 31.)

The Winter's Tale—The Pearl Theatre's static staging of Shakespeare's late tragicomedy. Director Kathryn Long seems intent on showing off the play's disunities and incongruities, but the production feels more like staid suburban theatre than like rowdy urban theatre. (80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802. Closes March 16.)

LONG RUNS

AFTER-PLAY: Theatre Four, 424 W. 55th St. 239-6200. . . . **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **THE FOOD CHAIN:**

Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 307-4100. . . . **GRANDMA SYLVIA'S FUNERAL:** SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 691-1555. . . . **GREASE!:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **HOW TO SUCCEED IN BUSINESS WITHOUT REALLY TRYING:** Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **PARTY:** Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321. (Closes March 24.) . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **ROB BECKER'S DEFENDING THE CAVEMAN:** Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 307-4100. . . . **SHOW BOAT:** Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100. . . . **SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ:** Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **SUNSET BOULEVARD:** Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4007. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. John's Church, 81 Christopher St. 279-4200.

DANCE

FELD BALLETS/NY—March 13 at 8: "Consort," "Chi," "Charmed Lives," and "Paean." . . . ¶ March 14 at 8: "Ah Scarlatti," "Ion," "Ogive," and "Paper Tiger." . . . ¶ March 15 at 8 and March 17 at 4: "The Grand Canon," "Santa Fe Saga," "Asia," and "Doo Dah Day." . . . ¶ March 16 at 2 and March 17 at noon: "Kids Dance," featuring repertory works performed by dancers chosen from city schools. . . . ¶ March 16 and March 19 at 8: "Harbinger," "Kore," "With Dew Upon Their Feet," and "Ludwig Gambits." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Through March 31.)

SHAPIRO & SMITH DANCE—The theatrically deft choreographers Danial Shapiro and Joanie Smith offer a new work, "What Dark/Falling Into Light," and three repertory pieces, "Dance with Two Army Blankets," "George & Betty's House," and "Rhapsody." (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. March 13-16 at 8 and March 17 at 3.)

"CLOSE AS I AM"—Former Stephen Petronio dancer Mia Lawrence presents her first full-length work, with a score by Guy Yarden and video projections by Ben Speth. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. March 14-17 at 9.)

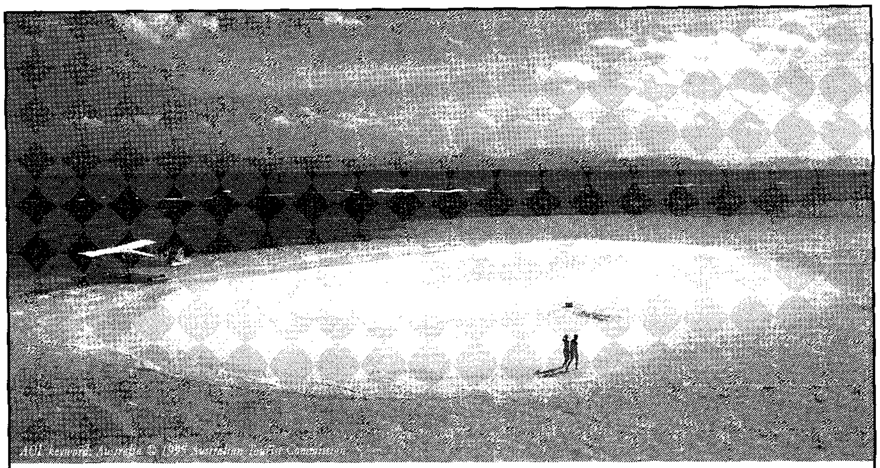
"RIVERDANCE"—The eighty-six performers graft tap, flamenco, and Balkan folk dance, among other styles, onto the percussion of Irish hard-shoe dances. (Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 247-4777. March 13 and March 16 at 2 and 8, March 14 at 7:30, March 15 at 8, and March 17 at 2 and 7:30.)

"WAVES"—The seven-member Klixbüll Dance Company performs an evening-length dance-and-video work, about the struggles of women in ancient, traditional, and modern societies. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. March 14-17 at 8:30.)

"BALLETS WITH A TWIST"—Choreographer Marilyn Klaus, who trained with vaudevillean Mae Murray and Busby Berkeley dancer Gladys Gartman, performs with her fourteen-member company in "7 Minute Musical," "Return to Normalcy," and "Temple of Swing," among other works. (Church of the Holy Trinity, 316 E. 88th St. 732-1813. March 14-16 at 8 and March 17 at 5.)

DANCES . . . PATRELLE—Francis Patrelle adds to an impressive résumé of full-length ballets ("Macbeth" and "Romeo and Juliet") with his version of "The Firebird." Also with Lourdes Lopez and James Fayette of New York City Ballet in "Come Rain/Come Shine." (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. March 14 at 7:30 and March 15-16 at 8. Through March 23.)

MOVEMENT RESEARCH BENEFIT—The Urban Bush Women present "Batty Moves," the Stephen Petronio Company offers "Lareigne," Yvonne Meier stomps in buckets of water, and Simone Forti improvises against the structured choreography that Tom Thayer and Curt Haworth of David Dorfman Dance perform in "Counting Laughter." (Pace Downtown Theatre, Spruce St. between Nassau and Gold Sts. March 16 at 8. For information about tickets, call 477-6854.)



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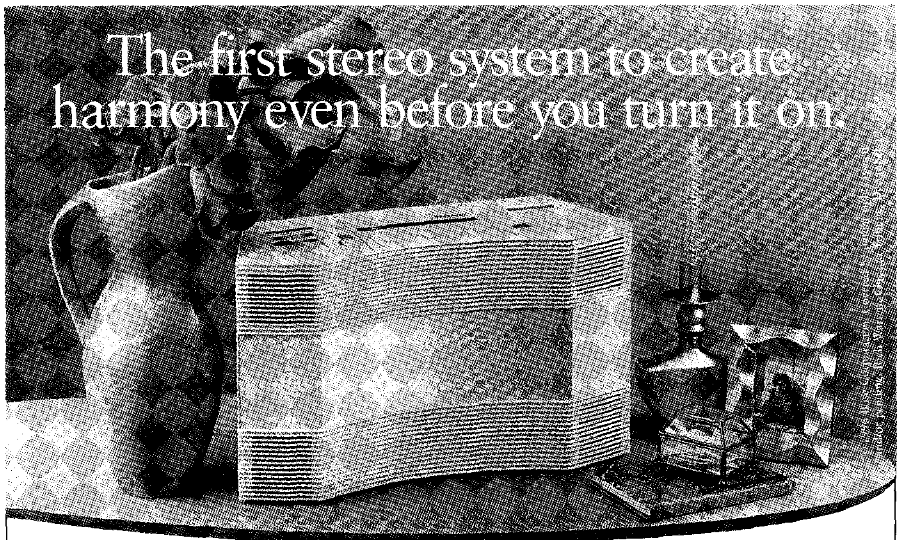
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NIGHT LIFE

Oasis—Despite a well-publicized fistfight in a Paris topless bar last year, the sailing's been smoother than smooth for these stoic moptops from Manchester. The band's second disk, "(What's the Story) Morning Glory," has stared down the sophomore jinx, and, buoyed by the global radio saturation of "Wonderwall," the Fab Five are finally enjoying the rock-god status they've so long aspired to. Here's a band that—like the Beatles and the Stones—isn't afraid to believe its own hype. (Paramount, Madison Square Garden. 465-6000. March 13 at 8.)

"Ellington: A New Take"—A powerhouse ensemble (the Carnegie Hall Jazz Band), three smart arrangers (Jimmy Heath, Jim McNeely, and Randy Sandke), and a feisty guest saxophonist (James Carter) reinterpret the great one. Heath takes on a choice swinger, "Johnny Come Lately," while McNeely modernizes earlier Ellington classics; Sandke turns the Duke's locomotive numbers (and a few great Ellington-and-Strayhorn tunes) into placid suites. Guitarist Howard Alden and cornettist Warren Vache also play together on select Ellingtoniana. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. March 14 at 8.)

Billy Taylor and Sheila Jordan—His piano work mirrors his persona: sturdy, erudite, and resolutely mainstream. The epiphanies may be few, but quality is a given. Back in the early sixties, vocalist Jordan recorded a deep-blue, hound-dog version of "You Are My Sunshine." She uses her voice as a horn, and her bebop harmonies and cantering rhythms are right up there with Phil Woods's; she'll give the straitlaced Taylor a run for his money. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. March 14 at 8.)

AC/DC—Though they're probably best known for "Dirty Deeds Done Dirt Cheap" (1977)—made with the group's original vocalist, Bon Scott, who later died from alcohol poisoning—this deceptively infantile Australian band has more than two decades of experience behind it, and one record, "Back in Black" (1980), that ranks among the finest (and most heavily sampled) in rock history. Much of their success can be attributed to the imagination of guitarist Angus Young, a grinning homunculus who performs dressed as an English schoolboy and has the troublesome habit of mooning the audience. Never really heavy metal, AC/DC is closer in spirit to the streamlined blues-based rock bands of the seventies. Live, they deliver a visceral, blissfully inane show. (Madison Square Garden. 465-6000. March 15 at 8. . . . ¶ Meadowlands Arena. 1-201 935-3900. March 17 at 8.)

Márta Sebestyén and Muzsikás—The best thing to come out of Hungary since Béla Bartók, Sebestyén—whose unearthly, beautiful voice suggests a Bulgarian women's choir channelled through Kate Bush—has long been a major player on the world-music stage. Muzsikás is the premier folk ensemble of Hungary. Its recent release, "Maramaros," is a collection of the lost Jewish music of Transylvania (once a Hungarian province). This is soul music of an altogether different sort. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. March 15 at 8.)

Milt Hinton—No one can slap the strings like the Judge, an eighty-five-year-old bassist who is jazz's answer to Vladimir Horowitz: a patriarch whose mastery and musical spirit have expanded with age. (New School, 66 W. 12th St. 229-5689. March 15 at 8.)

Peter, Paul & Mary—These urban folkies are certainly older and wider than the earnest trio that once made the world safe for Bob Dylan, but, as reflected on "Lifelines," their sprightly 1995 album, their spirit and their still-remarkable harmonies remain good and strong. (Westbury Music Fair. 1-516 334-0800.)

Allman Brothers Band—When they started out in 1969, the Allmans already seemed like a troop of battle-scarred veterans. Which may be why, despite the periodic feuding, splinter groups, and devastating deaths, these grizzled midnight riders are still soldiering on. Before anyone unfurled the Southern-rock banner, the Allmans were juggling blues and jazz, two musical forms known for resilience. This two-night stand finds them on the far side of one of their endless tours; it seems that the road does indeed go on forever. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. March 15-16 at 8.)

Black 47—Under the leadership of the tradition-shaking Celtic music gadfly Larry Kirwan, this raucously rocking crew has become an American version of the Pogues—only with a wider musical point of view and fewer barroom-brawl wounds. (Academy, 234 W. 43rd St. 307-7171. March 16 at 8.)

Chieftains—It wouldn't be St. Patrick's Day without a visit from Ireland's musical ambassadors. From their late-fifties work as members of Sean O Riada's visionary ensemble, Ceoltoiri Cualann, to their recent collaborations with Van Morrison and James Galway, these instrumental wizards have been doing for traditional Irish music what Bill Monroe did for the rural American string band—treating it with a respect and dignity that lift it well above any salt-of-the-earth contentiousness. (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. March 17 at 8.)

"Ellington: A New Take," at Carnegie Hall.

ROBERT ANDREW PARKER

Ziggy Marley—Considering the immensity of his father's shoes, it's not surprising that young David (Ziggy) Marley stumbled before he found his voice, on the 1988 breakthrough "Conscious Party." Since then, he's matured with pride and dignity, and, at twenty-seven, he's become something of an elder statesman to a new generation of reggae fans. (Academy. March 18 at 8.)

CLUBS

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it is advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

Blarney Star, 43 Murray St. (732-2873)—Home to fine Irish music every Friday night.

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Decent sight lines, great greasy food, prodigiously talented waitresses, and a consistent roster of high-quality acts. March 13: Celtic folk with **SUSAN MC KEOWN AND THE CHANTING HOUSE.** March 14: the **FABULOUS THUNDERBIRDS.** March 15-16: Pint-size guitar dynamo and former Bruce Springsteen sideman **NILS LOFGREN.**

Brownies, 169 Avenue A, at 10th St. (420-8392)—March 14: Swedish grunge with **SALT.** With 22 Brides.

Café Sin-é, 122 St. Marks Pl. (982-0370)—March 19: **PROFESSOR AND MARYANNE.** This impossibly precocious Staten Island duo has chosen its name with surprising acuity. Like their "Gilligan's Island" namesakes, they balance the cerebral (courtesy of guitarist-songwriter Ken Rockwell) with dark good looks (from helium-throated singer Danielle Brancaccio). Their new record, "Lead Us Not Into Penn Station," includes a few tracks that depart from their standard guitar-and-voice format (and feature a few members of Joe Jackson's band) and one song, "Just One Night," that could actually make them famous.

Chicago B.L.U.E.S., 73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (924-9755)—Dedicated to the music of the Windy City. March 15-16: Popa Chubby.

Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—This sprawling two-floor establishment has been all things to all people: meeting hall, rock club, jazz club, Off Broadway theatre. March 13: Original hardcore legends **FEAR.** March 14: **SEVEN MARY THREE.** . . . ¶ The Swing Dance Society gathers here every Sunday, with sets from eight until midnight. For information on the society, call 696-9737.

Limelight, Sixth Ave. at 20th St. (807-7850)—A church turned eighties hot spot, this unholy venue currently plays host to a variety of techno and alternative acts. Wednesday night is Disco 2000.

Mercury Lounge, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—March 14: **THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS.** March 16: Singer-songwriter **PIERCE TURNER.**

Nell's, 246 W. 14th St. (675-1567)—A Victorian-style club, home to an eclectic crowd of downtown youngsters dancing to throbbing funk and techno-pop.

Les Poulets, 16 W. 22nd St. (229-2000)—The name may be French, but the music here is Latin: expect salsa, merengue, and, now and then, a cha-cha. Dining.

S.O.B.'s, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—A great grass hut with a fruit-and-bamboo motif, dedicated to calypso, reggae, and the bossa nova. March 15: Instrumental funk with keyboardist **PHILLIP SAISSE.** March 18: **PUCHO AND HIS LATIN SOUL BROTHERS.** Dining.

Tramps, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—March 15: **THE WEDDING PRESENT.** This famed Leeds band led by ace songwriter David Gedge has never made it on these shores, but that hasn't stopped them from delivering a tome's worth of songs full of spiky wit and sharp melody, and guitar work that veers from jangle to jackhammer. They cruise into town for a rare gig, in support of their new album, "Miniplus," a collection of joyful songs about cars. March 16: Post-punk cult hero **FRANK BLACK.**

Wetlands, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—March 17: Ska with the **SCOFFLAWS.**

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—**JULIE WILSON** is currently at work in the woody nook known as the Oak Room. Dining.

Birdland, 2745 Broadway, at 105th St. (749-2228)—An airy two-tiered space with pastel

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walls and potted greenery. March 14-16: Eddie Henderson. Dining.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through March 17: the **MC COY TYNER** trio. Had this pianist retired after leaving John Coltrane's group in 1965, he'd still be remembered as one of the most brilliant and individualistic players of an era that prized iconoclasm in its musicians. But he never succumbed to the temptations of an electronic age; on his seventies records, he didn't have to plug in his piano to make it thunder and ring with authority. A certain laxness pervades his eighties work, but his drive returned with the dawn of the nineties. With saxophonist **MICHAEL BRECKER.** Sarting March 19: the **ZAWINUL SYNDICATE** and the **MIKE STERN** trio. Dining.

Bradley's, 70 University Pl., at 11th St. (228-6440)—On any given night, and well into the morning, one or another of New York's many formidable pianists can be found here. Drummer **LEON PARKER** is in through March 16, with **STEVE WILSON** (sax) **BRUCE BARTH** (piano), and **LARRY GRENADIER** (bass). The **PHILIP HARPER** trio takes over on March 18. Dining.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound pastel murals, and, through March 16, **DIXIE CARTER.** A small-town Tennessee girl turned television star ("Designing Women"), Carter also happens to be a friend of the Clintons, the author of a book on glamour after fifty, the wife of Hal Holbrook, a professional Southerner, and, miracle of miracles, not a narcissist. In this entertaining show, she exhibits a cozy feline poise, a sly mischievousness (bawdy but never cheap), and a quaint tea-dance style of singing. And, if she can't always cut it musically (more actress than vocalist, she has wisely surrounded herself with a first-rate band), her repertoire is winning, and she's smart, touching, and funny. . . .¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, pianist **PETER MINTUN** is in attendance.

Fez, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—A comfortable neo-Moroccan bar hidden inside the Time Café. The downstairs room, where bands perform, is a fine spot to take in a show. The **MINGUS BIG BAND**—a fourteen-piece ensemble that concentrates exclusively on the tricky, cacophonous work of its catalyst, the late Charles Mingus—still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

Fifty Seven Fifty Seven, 57 E. 57th St. (758-5757)—A cool, sumptuous piano-and-bass room in the Four Seasons Hotel, with twenty-two-foot-high ceilings, a long backlit bar stocked with single-malt Scotch, and fine jazz seven nights a week. Dining.

Five Spot, 4 W. 31st St. (631-0100)—March 15-16: The **BENNY POWELL** quintet. Trombonists bred in big bands the way Powell was aren't to be taken lightly. Having come up under Count Basie, he knows the value of clarity and the majestic force of the blues. Dining.

Iridium, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through March 17: the **STANLEY TURRENTINE** quintet. You judge a tenor player like Turrentine not by his virtuosity or his ideas but by his sound: a gritty, soulful calling card. He recently pledged renewed allegiance to his jazz roots, and, cleansed of his pop-funk noodling, he's now making quite a show of himself. **PAT MARTINO,** the archetypal guitarist's guitarist, who takes over on March 19, has won the admiration of three generations of jazz fretmen (and Jerry Garcia). He knows how to transform experience, technique, and ideas into genuine music—a concept lost on most guitar manglers. Now and for the foreseeable future, Mondays belong to **LES PAUL.** We admire him for his Edison-like ingenuity (he perfected everything from the solid-body electric guitar to multitrack recording), but we listen to him for the eccentric beauty of his guitar playing, an amalgam of blues, jazz, country, pop, musical in-jokes, electronic tricks, and anything else this mad scientist/vaudevillian can coax out of strings and tubes. A pure product of grass-roots show biz, he's a national treasure.

Knickerbocker, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—Brass rails, vintage posters, Hirschfeld drawings, and a piano. March 13-16: Piano and bass with Nat Jones and Andy McKee.

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—March 19: Avant jazz with Spanish Fly.

Le Madeleine, 403 W. 43rd St. (246-2993)—Every Sunday evening, guitar great **GENE BERTONCINI** lights up this cozy Hell's Kitchen bistro with his simmering melodicism and chordal grace.

Monkey Bar, 60 E. 54th St. (838-2600)—Beyond the monkey murals, there's a bright see-and-be-seen dining arena that's perfect for committing high-profile indiscretions in a strapless gown. But the place to be is the dark and crowded bar up front, by the grand piano, where the bar stools look like stuffed olives. You perch on the pimiento. Dining.

Rainbow & Stars, 30 Rockefeller Plaza (632-5000)—A plush, old-fashioned night club, sixty-five floors above it all, complete with Art Deco fixtures, intimate glitter, and a panoramic view as dizzying as the tab. Vocalist-actress **LINDA LAVIN** is the current star-in-residence. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in the Rainbow Room, there's a revolving dance floor, plus swinging big-band music courtesy of the Rainbow Room Orchestra, featuring vocalists Sean Mahony and Claudette Sierra. Closed Mondays.

Red Blazer Too, 349 W. 46th St. (262-3112)—Thursdays belong to Stan Rubin's big band, Fridays to the Kit McClure sextet, and Saturdays to Bob Cantwell and his Stompers.

Smalls, 183 W. 10th St. (929-7565)—This aptly named club features up-and-coming players jamming late into the night.

Tavern on the Green, Central Park W. at 67th St. (873-3200)—This legendary tourist haven makes serious jazz fans welcome in the Chestnut Room, which resembles a hunting lodge and is every bit as over-the-top as the rest of the establishment. Through March 17: vocalist Marilyn Volpe. **KT SULLIVAN** takes over on March 19.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through March 17: the **TOMMY FLANAGAN** trio. In his sixties, Flanagan now presides over all of jazz piano. Of a poetic cast, he unreels endlessly supple lines, paying them out at whatever speed they demand. He likes to spread the melody out in chords in the first chorus, then compress the song into brand-new single-note improvisations that contain sudden ascending arpeggios, beautiful little countermelodies, and patches of mock double time. The **JOE LOVANO** quartet gets the call starting March 19. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

Visiones, 125 Macdougal St., at W. 3rd St. (673-5576)—A tiny, low-key supper club where the jazz, like the Spanish-American cuisine, can take on a spicy, multicultural flavor. **RAY DRUMMOND,** New York's most reliable bassist, is in March 13-16. When you lay down the kind of shag carpet that this guy regularly does, anything on top sounds good. March 19: The Lynn Arriale trio.

Zinno, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—Through March 16: piano and drums with Pete Malinverni and Leroy Williams. Dining.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—"Poussin: Works on Paper." A rich trove of drawings, from the collection of Queen Elizabeth II, by the greatest Classicist of the Baroque era. Many are studies for large-scale works on mythological or Biblical subjects; others, however, are unrelated to any known paintings. Amid such bounty it seems almost silly to single out specific works. Still, one might linger over "St. Mary of Egypt Receiving Communion from St. Zosimus" (c. 1634-36): a drawing from the artist's Roman period, it depicts the two saints as small figures in an expansive wooded landscape, and much of its beauty and poignancy derives from the contrast between the saints' intimate communion and the vastness of the natural setting. Through March 31. . . . ¶ A complementary exhibit of seventeenth-century French drawings from the museum's collection is also on display. . . . ¶ "Fabergé in America." Fifteen of the forty-four extant imperial Easter eggs are on view in this exhibit of works from American collections, along with more than four hundred baskets, vases, table clocks, cigarette boxes, and other delights. Through April 28. . . . ¶ "Enamels of Limoges," a slew of precious objects dating from the twelfth through the fourteenth centuries—medallions, reliquaries, portable altars, and such—from the French town's abbey workshops. Through June 16. . . . ¶ Lesser-known and experimental color prints by artists employed by the W.P.A. Through May 26. . . . ¶ "Picturing Paradise: Colonial Photography of Samoa, 1875-1925." . . . ¶ The museum's African galleries have reopened after a nine-month renovation; on view are more than four hundred works from the kingdoms of Benin, Owo, Ijebu, Danhomé, Bangwa, and many others. . . . ¶ "Pergamon: The Telephos Frieze from the Great Altar." Twelve restored sections of this narrative relief are on exhibit, along with a model of the altar, Hellenistic coins from the city, and architectural fragments. Through April 14. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St.—When Paris's Georges Pompidou Center sent its big Brancusi retrospective on the road last year, its American destination was Philadelphia, not New York. As a happy consolation prize, fourteen choice sculptures from that show have now been loaned to MOMA; combined with ten of MOMA's own, they form a tantalizing mini-retrospective that represents the master at his best: the wood-and-limestone "Exotic Plant," at once primitive and unspeakably sophisticated; two big, comical oak cups; a set of four tilted heads, in bronze, plaster, and wood, so dreamy that you almost drift away; and the sublime gray-marble "Fish." The Modern's walnut "Cock" (1924) has been briefly reunited with its original pedestal from Brancusi's studio and paired with the Pompidou's 1935 bronze "Cock." Through April 23. . . . ¶ Michael Schmidt's "U-NI-TY," a series of a hundred black-and-white photographs depicting aspects of Germany since reunification. Through March 26. . . . ¶ A large retrospective of black-and-white photographs from the late forties to the present by Roy DeCarava. Among the subjects are jazz musicians, street and subway life, and

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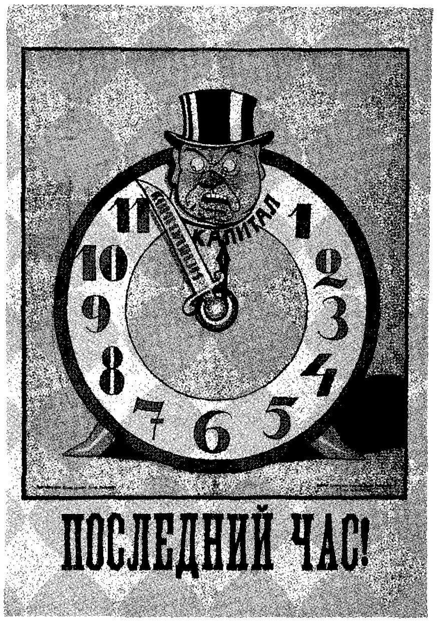
urban civil-rights protests. Through May 7. . . . ¶ "Deformations: Aspects of the Modern Grotesque" features works in many mediums by such artists as Francis Bacon, Cindy Sherman, James Ensor, Philip Guston, and Eva Hesse. Through May 21. . . . ¶ Drawings, an architectural model, and documentary photographs provide an overview of the German designer Lilly Reich's work, which included several installations for clothing, housing, and building-materials expositions in the twenties and thirties. Through May 7. . . . ¶ "Sol LeWitt Prints, 1970-1995." Through May 7. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, 11 to 6; Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 8:30.)



"Building the Collective," Soviet posters at the Wallach Art Gallery.

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—"Abstraction in the Twentieth Century: Total Risk, Freedom, Discipline." Curator Mark Rosenthal has assembled an exhibition chockablock with nonobjective (i.e., abstract) masterpieces—and it's worth recalling that the Guggenheim was founded as the Museum of Non-Objective Painting. The works are superb, from early Kandinskys and Maleviches to the mute totems of minimalism which have dominated abstract art since the sixties, but some of the elisions are galling. Where are Hans Hofmann, Kenneth Noland, Morris Louis? Why so few women? Why *nine* Rymans but not even one Marden? And why does this survey end, limply, with Martin Puryear and Richard Long, without including any artists who came to the fore after the seventies? Partisans of all ideological stripes will find something to gripe about in Rosenthal's refashioning of art history to suit his tastes. In short, a beautiful failure. Through May 12. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—A retrospective of a hundred assemblages, constructed from scavenged street and flea-market materials, by Edward Kienholz (1927-94) and Nancy Reddin Kienholz. Through June 2. . . . ¶ "Willem de Kooning's Door Cycle." A display of four paintings from the mid-sixties on long, narrow doors, supplemented by several related works and by photographs of de Kooning by Hans Namuth. Through May 26. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY, Central Park W. at 79th St.—"Amber: Window to the Past." Since the Mesolithic Period (9000-6000 B.C.), human beings have carved amulets out of fossilized tree resin. But all sorts of things—butterflies, tree frogs, geckos—were getting stuck in amber at a considerably earlier date; the oldest known fossils (on view here) are entrapped in ninety-four-million-year-old amber from New Jersey. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM, Eastern Parkway—A large number of paintings, sculptures, costumes, and religious objects from the colonial viceroyalties of New Spain and Peru are on view in "Converging Cultures: Art & Identity in Spanish America." . . . ¶ "Alone in a Crowd: Prints by African-American Artists from the 1930s-1940s." Through April 21 . . . . ¶ "A Slice of Schiaparelli: Surrealism in Fashion." Fifty examples of the stylish inspirations of Elsa Schiaparelli (1890-1973): evening gloves with reptilian scales; a day suit with metallic ladybugs, grasshoppers, and cockroaches creeping across it; a hat of celluloid grapes; and more. Through March 24. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

FASHION INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, Seventh Ave. at 27th St.—The Carnegie look was *it* between the wars. Tallulah, Marlene, Joan, the Duchess of Windsor, and Mrs. William Randolph Hearst were among the devotees of fashion designer Hattie Carnegie (née Henrietta Kanengeiser) and her understated elegance. Suits, evening dresses, WAC uniforms, and bridal gowns are on view, along with accessories, design sketches, and photographs. Through April 27. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, noon to 8, and Saturdays, 10 to 5.)

FRICK COLLECTION, 1 E. 70th St.—A small exhibition of four pastel portraits and two oils by Jean-Baptiste Greuze, done in Paris in the turbulent seventeen-nineties. Through April 14. (Open daily, except Mondays, 10 to 6; Sundays, 1 to 6.)

JAPAN SOCIETY, 333 E. 47th St.—"Rainbows and Shimmering Bridges" offers contemporary lacquerware by traditional artisans, lacquer masters, design mavens, and avant-gardistes. Through April 7. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 5.)

JEWISH MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 92nd St.—Obsessive, confrontational, and humorous attitudes in contemporary art are the focus of a show called "Too Jewish? Challenging Traditional Identities." Among the artists involved are Deborah Kass, Neil Goldberg, Elaine Reichek, Art Spiegelman, and Hannah Wilke. (Open Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, 11 to 5:45; Tuesdays, 11 to 8.)

MORGAN LIBRARY, 29 E. 36th St.—"A Great Heritage" comprises a hundred and three of the best sheets in the Duke of Devonshire's drawing collection and includes some of the greatest drawings by Leonardo, Raphael, Rembrandt, and Rubens. Through April 21. . . . ¶ "The Art of the Brontës," a fascinating roomful of drawings, manuscripts, and juvenilia by Anne, Charlotte, Emily, and their brother, Branwell, as well as some of their personal effects. Through April 14. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10:30 to 5; Saturdays, 10:30 to 6; Sundays, noon to 6.)

MUSEUM OF AMERICAN FOLK ART, Columbus Ave. at 65th St.—"Discovering Ellis Ruley." Sixty works by the African-American coal miner and construction laborer (1882-1959) who for the last twenty years of his life painted portraits of pop-culture celebrities, exotic landscapes, and idyllic farmscapes. Through April 28. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11:30 to 7:30.)

NATIONAL ACADEMY OF DESIGN, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—An exhibition of figurative sculptures created between 1898 and the Second World War. Through May 5. . . . ¶ Seven sculptures by Rodin are on view, from the collection of Iris and B. Gerald Cantor. Through May 19. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 5; Friday evenings until 8, with no admission charge after 5.)

NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St.—"Gathering Evidence," a display of primary-source documentation—books, pamphlets, photographs, diaries—of slavery, the Stonewall riots, the suffragist movement, and other episodes of American history. Through May 24. . . . ¶ Part One of "The Hand of the Poet" presents original manuscripts by masters from Donne to Eliot. Through April 27. . . . ¶ "Flights of Fancy," a dozen drawings by Charles Addams, most of which appeared in these pages. Through March 23. (Open Mondays, and Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 6.)

WALLACH ART GALLERY, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St.—"Building the Collective: Soviet Graphic Design, 1917-1937." A vivid and comprehensive survey of Soviet posters. Luminaries are here (Rodchenko, Lissitzky, the Stenberg brothers), but so are such lesser-known artists as Viktor Deni, Elena Semenova, and Natal'ia Pinus. Through March 30. (Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, 1 to 5.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

VIJA CELMINS—Recent paintings and drawings of the night sky, executed in the artist's trademark balance between abstraction and representation. Through April 5. (McKee, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.)

ROBERT GRAHAM—Three new bronze female nudes, along with dozens of prints of the same models. Through April 20. (Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St.)

VALERIE JAUDON—In these new grisaille paintings by a member of the seventies' pattern-and-decoration movement, the artist plays vaguely illusionistic, curtainlike stripes against plainly two-dimensional overlays of curvilinear stencilled shapes. Their most intriguing aspect, though, may be their not-so-accidental resemblance to the paintings of Philip Taaffe, a far more fashionable artist these days, whose debt to P. & D. cannot be overestimated. Do Jaudon's paintings merely point up that debt, or is she—more amusingly—consciously doing Taaffe doing her? Through March 23. (Janis, 110 W. 57th St.)

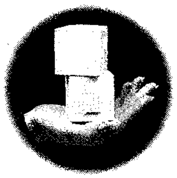
"NEW YORK FOLK"—New York City has produced its share of self-taught visionaries, too. This well-curated, well-annotated exhibit of paintings by Lawrence Lebduska (1894-1966), Abraham Levin (1880-1957), and Israel Litwak (1868-1960) brims with fantastic invention and exuberant fun. In one of Lebduska's imaginary landscapes, pandas frolic in a pastoral countryside that looks a lot like Connecticut. Levin, who was born in Russia, paints scenes of village life with an intense vision and a sophisticated palette that suggest Chagall. Litwak's fussily detailed architectural studies have a distinctly postmodernist banality. Through March 16. (Galerie St. Etienne, 24 W. 57th St.)

SHORT LIST—ROBERT ARNESON and **PHILIP WOFFORD,** Adams, 50 W. 57th St. Through March 30. . . . **STEVEN ASSAEL,** Tatistcheff, 50 W. 57th St. Through March 23. . . . **DREW BEATTIE AND DANIEL DAVIDSON,** Helman, 20 W. 57th St. Through March 30. . . . **ROBERT BERLIND,** De Nagy, 41 W. 57th St. Through April 6. . . . **PIERRE BONNARD,** Wildenstein, 19 E. 64th St. Open Mondays; through March 23. . . . **JEAN DUBUFFET** and **GEORG BASELITZ,** Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. Through March 23. . . . **MORRIS GRAVES,** Schmidt Bingham, 41 E. 57th St. Through March 30. . . . **EVA HESSE** and **ROBERTO JUAREZ,** Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. Through April 6. . . . **ANITA HUFFINGTON,** O'Hara, 41 E. 57th St. Through April 6. . . . **JOHN LAUB,** Fischbach, 24 W. 57th St. Through April 6. . . . **JOHN LEES,** Hirschl & Adler Modern, 21 E. 70th St. Through March 23. . . . **ANDREW MASULLO** and **KEITH HARING,** Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St. Through March 30 and March 23, respectively. . . . **DONNA MOYLAN,** Baldacci, 41 E. 57th St. Through April 6.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

ROBERT GROSVENOR—Two shows. At Cooper (155 Wooster St.), a pair of sculptures in red brick, slate, wood, sheet metal, plastic, and such. At Markey (55 Vandam St.), a survey of similarly various drawings, from 1968 to 1994, done with pencil, colored pen, masking tape, and strips of metal on paper. Both shows through March 23.

Y. Z. KAMI—Paintings and photographs mounted on canvas, by an Iranian-born artist. Kami's



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preferred subjects—dolorously sexy pseudo-Coptic ephebes with dark eyes and pouty lips—suggest a hilarious pastiche of Baron von Gloeden's beautiful boys, Caravaggio's hustlers, and Walter and Margaret Keane's big-eyed poster children. It's too bad the artist isn't more perceptive about his own campiness; some self-awareness might provide this well-executed work with a much-needed charge. Through March 30. (Holly Solomon, 172 Mercer St.)

Julian Schnabel—Two shows. At Pace Wildenstein (142 Greene St.), a series of paintings titled "The Conversion of St. Paolo Malfi" forms a memorial to the artist's late studio assistant, who died in a motorcycle accident outside Rome. Though the canvases display all the furious energy for which Schnabel is famous, they seem like rote exercises. Upstairs, at Sperone Westwater, three very large paintings suggest more deliberation and care. The artist deftly manipulates numerous, often contradictory, conventions, as in "Untitled (Chinese Painting)" (1994), in which messy, thickly impastoed Ab Exish fronds of dark-green paint are laid over an atmospheric red-to-pink background. In an annoying misstep (literally), Schnabel has left traces of his footprints across the canvas—an all-too-obvious reference to Pollock which is no less irritating for its self-conscious butchness than for its preening affectation. Both shows through March 23.

Gary Simmons—Large, cartoonish chalk drawings on the gallery walls, which have been covered with a blackboard-like paint. Through April 13. (Metro Pictures, 150 Greene St.)

Kevin Wixted—Pleasantly decorative semi-abstract paintings with a Moorish feel, which play on the by now rather exhausted tensions between surface and depth, that is, between two- and three-dimensional space. *Through March 23. (Beitzel, 102* Prince St.)

"Counterculture"—Subtitled "Alternative Information from the Underground Press to the Internet," this historical survey digs up more than a thousand newspapers, zines, digital publications, pamphlets, and other paraphernalia from the mid-sixties on. Through April 20. (Exit Art, 548 Broadway.)

"Model Home"—The Institute of Contemporary Art's Clocktower gallery reopens with this show, which was conceived as a living space in which visitors may coo and criticize, just like they do in other people's homes. Parts of every room, *from bar to bath, are here, along with* window treatments and swatches of wall, floor, and furniture coverings. Sarah Charlesworth, Robert Gober, Byron Kim, Frank Moore, Rona Pondick, Elaine Reichek, Lawrence Weiner, and Franz West are among the sixty artists involved. Through March 31. (108 Leonard St., between Broadway and Lafayette St. Open Thursdays and Fridays, 4 to 10; Saturdays and Sundays, 1 to 7.)

Short List—**LISA BECK** and **LUCKY DE BELLEVUE**, Feature, 76 Greene St. Through March 30. . . . **LOUISE BELCOURT**, Sundvik, 26 Grand St. Through March 23. . . . **LEON GOLUB**, Feldman, 31 Mercer St. Through March 30. . . . **LUKE GRAY**, Erben, 284 Mott St. Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 1 to 6:30; Saturdays, 11 to 6; through March 30. . . . **BEATRIZ MILHAZES**, Thorp, 103 Prince *St. Through April 13. . . .* **DONA NELSON**, Klein, 40 Wooster St. Through April 6. . . . **ANTOINE PAOLETTI**, 123 Watts Gallery, 123 Watts St. Opens at noon; through April 4. . . . **BILL RICHARDS**, Ricco/Maresca, 152 Wooster St. Through April 13. . . . **JULIA SCHER**, Rosen, 130 Prince St. Through April 6. . . . **PETER VOULKOS** and **DARREN WATERSTON**, Cowles, 420 West Broadway. Through March 23. . . . **NARI WARD**, Deitch, 76 Grand St. Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, noon to 6; through April 6. . . . **DANIEL WIENER** and **ROBERT MELEE**, Bravin Post Lee, 80 Mercer St. Through March 30. . . . **STEVE WOLFE**, Luhring Augustine, 130 Prince St. Through March 30. . . . **BETTY WOODMAN**, Protetch, 560 Broadway. Through March 23.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

Sotheby's—March 14: American paintings, including a Prospect Park scene by William Merritt Chase and notable works by Jessie *Arms Botke, Marsden Hartley, and the Cali*fornia plein-air painter William Wendt. . . . ¶ March 16: Artifacts and manuscripts relating to the Russian space program. At the conclusion, Sotheby's will auction a seventy-two-page autograph working manuscript of Einstein's special theory of relativity. When this document last came up for auction, in 1987, it sold for $1.2 million; this time Sotheby's estimates that it will bring three to five times that amount. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

Self-portrait by Bruce Cratsley (Richardson).

Christie's—March 13: American paintings, including a notable Andrew Wyeth oil, "Washington and Lafayette," two by his father (N. C. Wyeth), and a high-energy Stuart Davis *landscape from 1933. . . .* ¶ March 15: Rugs and carpets. (Park Ave. at 59th St. 546-1000.)

Salmagundi Club—The club, which has been a haven for New York artists since its founding in 1871, offers some two hundred oils, watercolors, pastels, and graphics in the first of three auctions of works by its members. (47 Fifth Ave., at 12th St. March 15 at 8:30. 255-7740. The ensuing auctions will be held on March 22 and March 29.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

Harry Callahan—A survey of the many different themes and variations the photographer has explored, in black-and-white and color, since the forties. Through April 6. (Pace Wildenstein MacGill, 32 E. 57th St.)

Bruce Cratsley—Cratsley's reputation as a master of light and shadow is certainly borne out in this generous twenty-year retrospective. Most of the quiet, warm-toned views here—of fireworks over the Brooklyn Bridge, sculpture fragments at the Met, a window of the Louvre—are impeccably balanced, meditative studies. But two pictures, "For Lisette" (1976) and "Waiting, Grand Central" (1983), push further into the poetic with daring, fragile compositions and a wealth of grisaille and black tones that produce complex, nearly flawless gems. Through March 23. (Richardson, 560 Broadway.)

Bill Jacobson—Large, rich, black-and-white (charcoal-and-platinum, really) images of attenuated male and female figures on the verge of disappearing into the dark beyond. For all their technical virtuosity, these pictures succeed only as elegiac emblems of the sublime—not as sublime works of art. Through March 23. (Saul, 560 Broadway.)

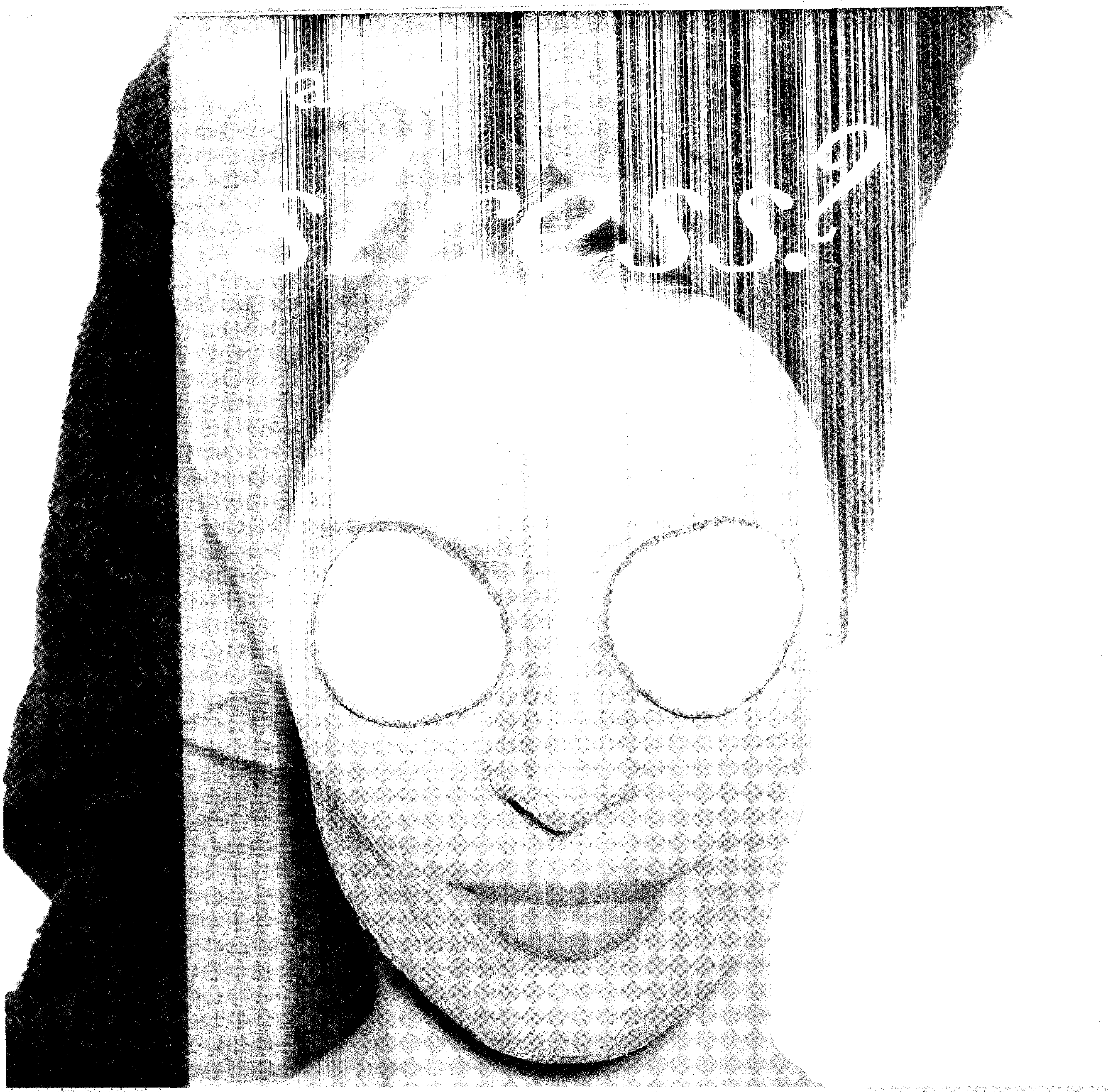
Fred W. McDarrah—A satisfying exhibit of nearly a hundred documentary photographs of New York artists, by the longtime *Village Voice* photojournalist and picture editor. Made between 1958 and 1978, the pictures show Johns, Kline, Oldenburg, de Kooning, Cadmus, and many others at work, and sometimes at play, in studios, at the Cedar Tavern, and at gallery openings. Through March 23. (Art et Industrie, 52 Thompson St.)

La-La Land—Two young Los Angeles photographers are simultaneously showing images of that city's sprawling banality. At Gorney (100 Greene St.), **CATHERINE OPIE** (whose meticulous portraits of pierced and tattooed fetishists were snarling triumphs at the last Whitney Biennial) offers large saturated-color prints of Beverly Hills house façades and very small panoramic pictures of freeways. The treatment of the real estate, with lush green trees and hedges framing lots of cement walkways, triple-lock gates and doors, and "armed response" warning placards, is one-note and wooden. But Opie's freeways are gorgeous: long spans of concrete which curve along parallel shadows, in antique-looking platinum prints with subtle gradations of tone. Through March 30. . . . ¶ At Caplan (580 Broadway), two huge triptychs of suburban L.A. garages by **MILES COOLIDGE**. Each color panel shows a different interior wall with the expected tools, toys, and trash on hand. The grand scale and the attention to detail make for a fun show. Through March 16.

"Faces of the Holocaust"—Physician-photographer Mark Swartz's series of pictures that have been digitally combined with texts in order to present narratives of the era. Through March 23. (Gallery 84, 50 W. 57th St.)

Short List—**ROBERT ADAMS**, Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. Through March 23. . . . **LOLA ALVAREZ BRAVO**, Throckmorton, 153 E. 61st St. Through March 16. . . . **JED DEVINE**, Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. Through April 13. . . . **MACDUFF EVERTON**, Borden, 560 Broadway. Through March 23. . . . **TORKIL GUDNASON**, Bridgewater/Lustberg, 560 Broadway. Through March 16. . . . **CANDIDA HÖFER**, Sonnabend, 420 West Broadway. Through March 23. . . . **DENNIS HOPPER**, Shafrazi, 119 Wooster St. Through March 16. . . . **CRAIGIE HORSFIELD**, Gladstone, 99 Greene St. Through March 16. . . . **CONNIE IMBODEN** and **VICTOR FRIEDMAN**, Witkin, 415 West Broadway. Through April 13. . . . **BUILDER LEVY**, O.K. Harris, 383 West Broadway. Through March 30. . . . **RAY K. METZKER** and **THOMAS BARROW**, Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St. Through April 13. . . . **SHEILA METZNER** and **JUDITH JOY ROSS**, Danziger, 130 Prince St. Through April 6. . . . **STEPHEN PRINA**, Luhring Augustine, 130 Prince St. Through March 30. . . . **LEEANNE SCHMIDT**, Gallery 292, 120 Wooster St. Through March 23. . . . **DAVID VESTAL**, Mann, 42 E. 76th St. Through April 27.

(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum and the Museum of Modern Art.)



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CLASSICAL MUSIC

(The box-office number for Alice Tully Hall is 875-5050; for Avery Fisher Hall, 875-5030; and for Carnegie Hall and Weill Recital Hall, 247-7800.)

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera—**carmen.** (March 13 and March 16 at 8 and March 19 at 7:30.) . . . **così fan tutte.** (March 14 at 8.) . . . **salome.** (March 15 at 8:30.) . . . **la forza del destino.** (March 16 at 1:30.) . . . **the voyage,** by Philip Glass. (March 18 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

New York City Opera—**tosca.** (March 13 at 8.) . . . **der rosenkavalier.** (March 14 at 8 and March 17 at 1:30.) . . . **la traviata.** (March 15 at 8.) . . . **la bohème.** (March 16 at 1:30.) . . . **attila,** by Verdi. (March 16 and March 19 at 8.) (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic—At Avery Fisher Hall. March 14 and March 16 at 8 and March 15 at 11 A.M.: Mariss Jansons conducts Bartók's "Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta" and Brahms's Symphony No. 2. . . . ¶ March 18 at 6:45: An hour-long "Rush Hour Concert," in which Leonard Slatkin leads Chabrier's "Suite Pastorale," Satie's "Gymnopédies" No. 1 and No. 3 (orchestrated by Debussy), and Ravel's "Daphnis et Chloé" Suite No. 2.

Netherlands Chamber Orchestra—Claire Bloom is the narrator in Saint-Saëns's "Carnival of the Animals," in a concert that also includes Roussel's Sinfonietta and Brahms's Serenade No. 1. Philippe Entremont conducts. (Avery Fisher Hall. March 13 at 8.)

Cleveland Orchestra—Christoph von Dohnányi conducts Schoenberg's Five Pieces for Orchestra (Op. 16) and Bruckner's Symphony No. 5. (Carnegie Hall. March 18 at 8.)

RECITALS

"Voices of the Spirit"—Soprano Dawn Upshaw is curating a series of three concerts of vocal chamber music that, as she puts it, "speak of the human spirit and its conditions." In the opening program, she will be assisted by pianist Richard Goode, baritone William Sharp, conductor John Harbison, and a period-instrument ensemble in works that emphasize "calls and awakenings" to spiritual awareness: Bach's Cantata No. 32 ("Liebster Jesu, mein Verlangen"), Purcell's "The Blessed Virgin's Expostulation," Mr. Harbison's "Samuel Chapter," the première of Anna Weesner's "Song About Law and Light," and selections from Fauré's "La Chanson d'Ève." (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. March 13 at 8.)

Camerata Latinoamericana—The chamber ensemble, recently formed by pianist Pablo Zinger and jazz clarinettist and saxophonist Paquito D'Rivera, performs Latin American "classical" music derived from folkloric roots, including works by Jack Délano, Astor Piazzolla, Carlos Guastavino, Angel Lasala, and Juarés Lamarque. (Beethoven's Clarinet Trio seems a curious program mate to these, but so it shall be.) (Americas Society, Park Ave. at 68th St. March 13 at 8. For information about tickets, call 935-6075.)

Peter Hurford—The organist, especially noted for his Bach interpretations, plays the Leipzig master's Preludes and Fugues in A Minor (BWV 543) and E-Flat Major (BWV 552, the "St. Anne") in a wide-ranging program that includes works by Couperin, Mendelssohn, and Vaughan Williams. (St. Bartholomew's Church, Park Ave. at 50th St. 378-0248. March 13 at 8.)

Manhattan Contemporary Ensemble—At Borden Auditorium, the opening performances of an annual modern-music festival. March 14 at 8: Messiaen's "Oiseaux Exotiques" and works by Pierre Charvet, Les Thimming, Edward Green, and Nuccio d'Angelo. . . . ¶ March 18 at 8: Crumb's "Quest" and Henze's "Carillon, Récitatif, Masque," as well as music by Pierre Drouet, Ursula Mamlok, Christopher Rouse, and Nicola Lefanu. (Manhattan School of Music, Broadway at 122nd St. No tickets necessary.)

Juilliard String Quartet—March 15 at 8: Performing Beethoven's Quartets in C Minor (Op. 18, No. 4), E-Flat Major (Op. 74), and B-Flat Major (Op. 130, with the "Grosse Fuge" attached). (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949.) . . . ¶ March 19 at 8: Playing three twentieth-century masterworks: Schuman's Quartet No. 5, Ralph Shapey's Quartet No. 8, and Dutilleux's "Ainsi la Nuit." (Juilliard Theatre, 155 W. 65th St. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 769-7406.)

Hildegard Behrens and Christoph Eschenbach—The soprano and the pianist turn their attention to Schumann's "Frauenliebe und -leben," Berg's "Seven Early Songs," Wagner's "Wesendonck-Lieder," and a set of Strauss songs. (Carnegie Hall. March 16 at 8.)

Guarneri Quartet—Offering string quartets by Haydn (in D Major, Op. 64, No. 5), Schoenberg (his Second, with soprano Lucy Shelton assisting), and Sibelius (in D Minor). (Metropolitan Museum. March 16 at 8.)

Emanuel Ax—An afternoon of piano variations: Mozart's "Ah, vous dirai-je, Maman" Variations, Haydn's F-Minor Variations, Peter Lieberson's Variations, and Beethoven's "Diabelli" Variations. (Alice Tully Hall. March 17 at 2.)

Maurizio Pollini—The pianist's survey of Beethoven's sonatas moves into the composer's late period with performances of the Sonatas in E Minor (Op. 90), A Major (Op. 101), and B-Flat Major (Op. 106, the "Hammerklavier"). (Carnegie Hall. March 17 at 3. The final concert in the series will take place on March 23.) . . . **note:** The autograph manuscript of the Op. 90 sonata and a sketch page of the "Hammerklavier" are among the many treasures of Beethoveniana on display through May 27 in Carnegie Hall's Rose Museum. Concertgoers can reach the museum from the hall's first-tier level; the general public may enter at 154 W. 57th St.

Hildegard Behrens and Christoph Eschenbach, at Carnegie Hall.

N. ASCENCIOS

Horacio Gutiérrez—The Cuban-born pianist offers Mendelssohn's "Variations Sérieuses," Schumann's "Humoreske," and Liszt's Sonata. (Avery Fisher Hall. March 17 at 3.)

Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center—Presenting Bartók's Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano, Ravel's "Chansons Madécasses" (with mezzo-soprano Dolora Zajick), and Elgar's Piano Quintet. (Alice Tully Hall. March 17 at 5 and March 19 at 7:30.)

Paul Groves—Tenor, with pianist James Levine, in songs by Debussy, Bellini, and Schumann (his "Dichterliebe"). (Alice Tully Hall. March 17 at 8.)

Who's Afraid of Roger Sessions?—Everybody admits that his compositions are uncompromising and unforgiving to both performer and listener. Still, most musicians and music lovers respect his work, and some sincerely adore it. Among the latter group is the violinist Jorja Fleezanis, concertmaster of the Minnesota Orchestra, who has championed Sessions' music for many years and who has been known to play it in a way that suggests that the composer may have been writing from the heart. In this centennial tribute (Sessions was born on December 28, 1896, in Brooklyn), pianist Robert Helps joins her in a performance of several of the composer's solo and chamber works. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. March 18 at 8.)

California E.A.R. Unit—The Los Angeles-based contemporary-music ensemble performs the première of Virko Baley's "Dreamtime," a sixty-five-minute, nineteen-movement instrumental work inspired by Delmore Schwartz's 1937 short story "In Dreams Begin Responsibilities." Rand Steiger conducts. (Weill Recital Hall. March 18 at 8.)

Sarah Rothenberg—Felix Mendelssohn enjoyed all the benefits a budding artist could hope for: a loving family, a cultured home, wealth, talent, and the best teachers. His sister Fanny, three years older, had the same advantages but, because of her sex, far fewer opportunities to exploit them. She grew into an accomplished pianist and composer but (with a single exception) didn't demonstrate either skill publicly. Only a handful of her five hundred compositions were published, and several of those appeared without attribution in collections of her brother's pieces. She married the painter Wilhelm Hensel in 1829 but remained very close to her brother. When she died of a stroke, on May 14, 1847 (a day after composing her final song), Felix lost his muse; his own health quickly declined and, after writing a few sombre works in minor keys, he expired six months later. In this piano recital, Ms. Rothenberg (always alert to innovative programming ideas) performs Fanny Mendelssohn-Hensel's "Das Jahr" (a cycle of twelve movements—one for each month—written in 1841), Bach's "Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue," and two works by Joan Tower: "Or Like a . . . an Engine" and the première of "Holding a Daisy (For Sarah)." (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. March 19 at 8.)

Philadelphiophony—Since New York is the home of three major conservatories, it might seem like a coals-to-Newcastle proposition for an out-of-town music school to bring its talent here. But Philadelphia's Curtis Institute bows to none. Samuel Barber was the second student to cross its threshold when it opened, in 1924, directly behind the violinist Max Aranoff; in the ensuing years it has shaped the techniques and sensibilities of a large percentage of America's most notable musicians—an especially striking achievement given its small enrollment, which currently stands at a hundred and sixty-two students, every one of whom studies on a full scholarship. This benefit concert features music by four Curtis alumni: Lukas Foss (Capriccio for Cello and Piano), Lee Hoiby (Serenade for Violin), Ned Rorem ("Last Poems of Wallace Stevens"), and

Daron Hagen (the première of a new song cycle). All the performers are Curtis graduates as well, and each of the composers will double as pianist for his portion. (Weill Recital Hall. March 19 at 8.)

ALSO OF INTEREST

ORATORIO SOCIETY OF NEW YORK: An all-Vivaldi program. (Carnegie Hall. March 13 at 8.) . . . **BARGEMUSIC:** An all-Brahms program. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 1-718 624-4061. March 14 at 7:30 and March 17 at 4.) . . . **FESTIVAL CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY:** Brahms, Beethoven, and Françaix. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. March 14 at 8.) . . . **BRUCE FORD:** Tenor, performing Beethoven's "An die ferne Geliebte" and other songs. (Weill Recital Hall. March 15 at 8.) . . . **MANNES OPERA ENSEMBLE:** Mozart's "La Finta Giardiniera," fully staged. (Cloisters Theatre, Riverside Church, Claremont Ave. at 122nd St. March 15 and March 19 at 8 and March 17 at 2. For information about tickets, call 580-0210, ext. 261.) . . . **FLORENCE GOULD HALL CHAMBER PLAYERS:** Works by Fauré, Schubert, and others, including several contemporary French composers. (55 E. 59th St. 355-6160. March 17 at 2.) . . . **NEW YORK CHAMBER ENSEMBLE:** In a program that includes Mahler's "Rückert-Lieder" (with baritone Mark Oswald). (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. March 17 at 3.) . . . **SERGIU LUCA:** Playing unaccompanied violin works by Bach, in a resonant space. (St. Paul's Chapel, Columbia University; enter at Broadway and 116th St. March 17 at 3. Tickets at the door.) . . . **PAUL HILLIER:** Baritone, with lutenist Richard Savino, in medieval and Renaissance music. (Cloisters, Fort Tryon Park. 650-2290. March 17 at 3.) . . . **LEILA JOSEFOWICZ:** Violinist. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. March 17 at 3.) . . . **JAMES LANCELOT:** The organist of England's Durham Cathedral. (Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, Park Ave. at 84th St. March 17 at 4. Tickets at the door.) . . . **COREY CEROVSEK:** Violinist. (Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level. March 18 at 7:30. For information about tickets, call 875-5050.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

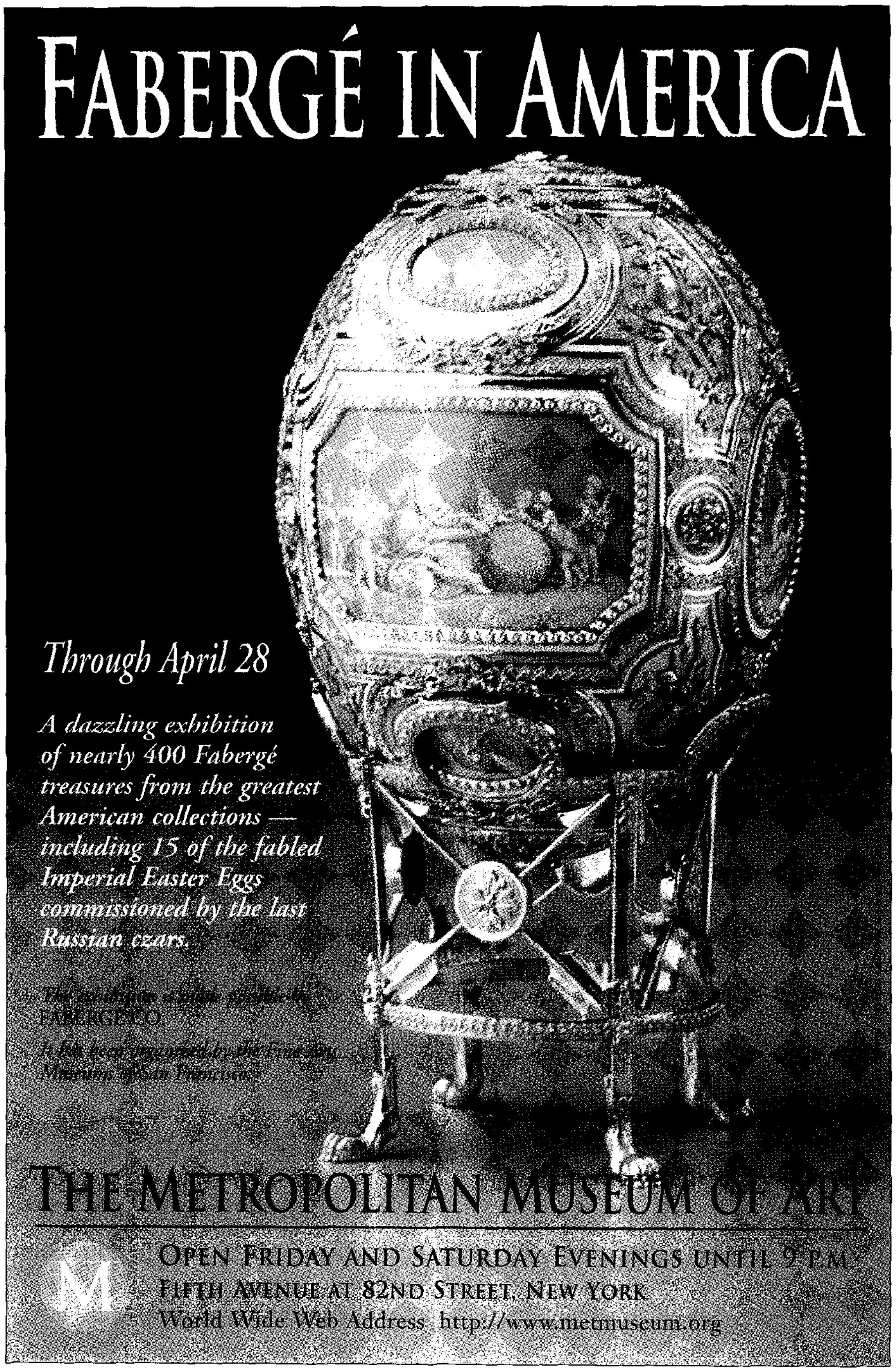
GREEN STREETS—Since St. Patrick's Day falls on a Sunday this year, the parade and many of the green-tinted celebrations that follow it have been pulled back to Saturday. March 16 at 11: Grand Marshall William Flynn leads shamrockers up the green line on Fifth Ave., from 44th St. to 86th St., then east to Third Ave. . . . ¶ March 16 at 2: In "A Couple of Blackguards," Frank and Malachy McCourt, storytelling brothers from Limerick, elaborate on their family history. ("It's a pack of lies," their mother is reported to have said at the one performance she saw before she died.) The McCourts are part of the festivities marking the opening of the Museum of the City of New York's "Gaelic Gotham" exhibition, which chronicles Irish contributions to the city's culture. (Fifth Ave. at 104th St. For information about exhibition events, call 534-1672, ext. 206. No charge beyond museum admission.)

CRIME SCENES—Suzannah Lessard, the author of "The Architect of Desire" and the great-granddaughter of the Gilded Age architect Stanford White, participates in a discussion about the aftereffects of tabloid murder trials on the victims' families. (White was murdered by Harry K. Thaw, who was distraught over the architect's involvement with his wife, Evelyn Nesbit.) While the panelists in the daylong symposium discuss notorious début-de-siècle murders, fingerprint technician Joe Costanzo talks with younger buffs about crime scenes, criminal investigations, and dusting for fingerprints. (New-York Historical Society, 2 W. 77th St., at Central Park W. March 16, from 9:30 to 4; children will be fingerprinted at 11. For more information, call 873-3400.)

READINGS—March 15 at 6:30: Bart Plantenga reads from "Wiggling Wishbone: Stories of Pata-Sexual Speculation." (Biblio's, 317 Church St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ March 15 at 7:30: Poets Cyrus Cassells ("The Mud Actor") and Li-Young Lee ("The City in Which I Love You") read from their work. (Dia Center for the Arts, 548 W. 22nd St. 989-5566.) . . . ¶ March 19 at 8: Language poets Lyn Hejinian ("Cold of Poetry") and Ron Silliman ("New Sentence") read from their work. (Maison Française, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ March 19 at 8: A reading by novelist Richard Powers ("Galatea 2.2"). (Deutsches Haus, Columbia University, 412 W. 116th St., near Amsterdam Ave. No tickets necessary.)

TALKS—March 13 at 10:30 A.M.: At the 92nd Street Y's morning seminars for parents, Beth Teitelman takes up the pros and cons of security blankets. (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100.) . . . ¶ March 13 at 6:30: Emile Biasini, the government secretary in charge of *les grands travaux* during the administration of François Mitterand, talks with I. M. Pei, who designed the modern pyramidal entrance to the Louvre, about Mitterand's architectural program. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 355-6160.) . . . ¶ March 16 at 4: Translator Constantine Contogenis talks about the poetry of the *kisang*, the Korean courtesans engaged to write and perform erotic songs for bureaucrats and officers of the Yi dynasty. (Poets House, 72 Spring St. To register—and reserve copies of the poems—call 431-7920.)

WALK—March 16 at 1: Herbalist Letha Hadadi scours Little India for springtime rejuvenators—such as *ashwagandha*, a mild, East Indian form of ginseng, and *trifala*, a powder of three fruits—before dining at a neighborhood kosher vegetarian Indian restaurant. (For more information, call the Open Center, 219-2527.)



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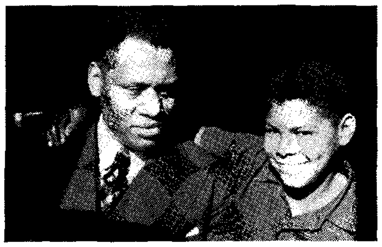

Paul Robeson and son Paulie,
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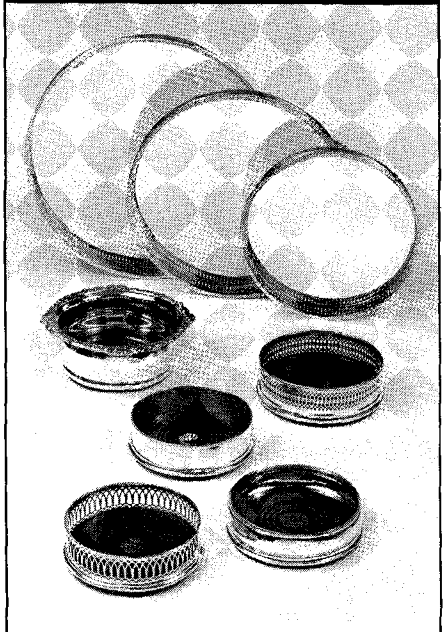

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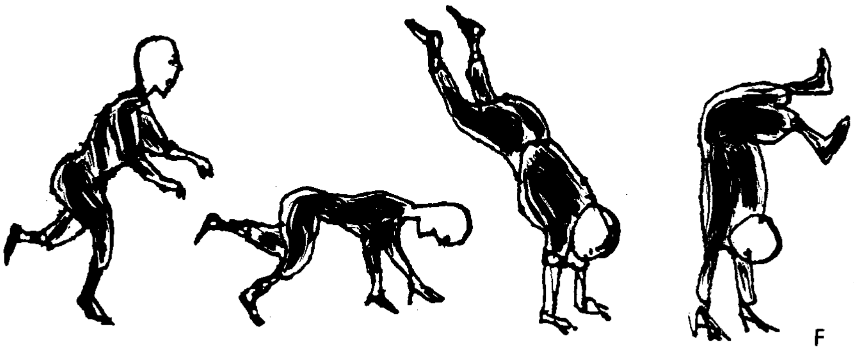


THE MOVIES

FILMS OPENING THIS WEEK

The Celluloid Closet—Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman's documentary history of gay men and lesbians in the movies. (Reviewed below in Current Films.) Opening March 15.

Ed—Matt LeBlanc stars in a comedy directed by Bill Couturié, about a minor-league baseball team whose third baseman is a chimpanzee. With Jayne Brook, Bill Cobbs, and Jack Warden. Written by David Mickey Evans. Opening March 15. (34th Street Showplace, First & 62nd Cinemas, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Waverly, Chelsea Cinemas, 62nd & Broadway, and National Twin.)

Executive Decision—Kurt Russell and Steven Seagal team up to save the nation's capital from a hijacked jet full of nerve gas, in a thriller directed by Stuart Baird. With Halle Berry and John Leguizamo. Written by Jim and John Thomas. Opening March 15. (Village East Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Showplace, Gemini, Orpheum VII, 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

Institute Benjamenta—This dark fantasy, in which a young man (Mark Rylance) enrolls in a school for servants, is the first live-action feature directed by the animators known as the Brothers Quay. (Film Forum.)

Knocks at My Door—A drama by director Alejandro Saderman. In Spanish. (Reviewed below in Current Films.) Opening March 15.

Land and Freedom—Ian Hart plays an idealistic young Briton who joins the anti-Fascists, in Ken Loach's drama about the Spanish Civil War. With Rosana Pastor. Written by Jim Allen. Opening March 15. (Lincoln Square.)

Man of the Year—Dirk Shafer's comic account of his reign as *Playgirl's* Man of the Year, a position that kept him deep in the closet during 1992. Opening March 15. (Village East Cinemas.)

CURRENT FILMS

(The signed notes are by Bruce Diones, Sarah Kerr, Anthony Lane, Terrence Rafferty, and James Wolcott. If a movie has been reviewed in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given. Theatre information is listed on page 32.)

Babe—Despite the improbable articulateness of the creatures in Chris Noonan's wonderfully imaginative talking-animal movie, they remain in character as animals: the movie never lets us forget that they don't see the world the same way we do. The title character is a piglet who wants to be a sheepdog. Babe and his friends—notably, a farmwise duck and a pair of proud Border collies—act out a comedy of animal manners that is much funnier and much cannier than any recent movie about human relationships: a lovely, stubbornly idiosyncratic fable of aspiration and survival.—T.R. (9/4/95) (Manhattan Twin.)

The Birdcage—Mike Nichols' American remake of "La Cage aux Folles" stars Robin Williams, Nathan Lane, Gene Hackman, and Dianne Wiest. Elaine May wrote the script. (Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema.) (Village Theatre VII, 34th St. East, Baronet, Coronet, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, and Criterion Center.)

Bottle Rocket—Wes Anderson's début film, about three argumentative friends who get together for some petty robberies, meanders pleasantly, like a road movie, with a seventies-style, anything-goes offhandedness that whisks the audience through the rough spots. But though a sweet spirit informs its characters' larcenous actions, the movie never really sets off any fireworks. Owen C. Wilson (who co-wrote the script with Anderson) is especially good as the tense, anarchic leader of the trio—his soldierly handsomeness suggests a blond Montgomery Clift.—B.D. (34th Street Showplace and Lincoln Square.)

Broken Arrow—John Travolta plays a disgruntled Air Force pilot who hijacks a couple of nuclear warheads. This is not, however, a standard-issue doomsday thriller, but a spectacularly nutty and entertaining chase picture; the director, John Woo—who is best known for his delirious Hong Kong gangster movies—tosses off risky stunts and eye-popping effects like one-liners. The hero and the heroine, played by Christian Slater and Samantha Mathis, are likable, but the character to watch is Travolta, who brings a refreshingly all-American exuberance to action-movie villainy. Screenplay by Graham Yost (who also wrote "Speed").—T.R. (2/19/96) (Murray Hill Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and Criterion Center.)

The Celluloid Closet—Directors Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman have turned the late Vito Russo's 1981 study of gay and lesbian characters in the movies into a fabulous look at queer culture and the way it has been perceived through the decades. Epstein and Friedman don't share Russo's rage: this is a forgiving look back, more thoughtful than angry in its assessment of the industry's limitations. The sincere narration, written by Armistead Maupin and delivered by Lily Tomlin, is very PBS, but the tone shifts entertainingly whenever the directors turn to interviews, with the likes of Maupin, Harvey Fierstein, Susan Sarandon, and the incandescent Susie Bright, all of whom bring humor and great understanding to the clips. And while the gay characters cited are sometimes villainous ("Cruising"), suicidal ("The Children's Hour"), and self-pitying ("The Boys in the Band"), they're also glamorous ("Morocco"), funny ("Lover Come Back"), and compassionate ("Longtime Companion"). The movie is a gripping testament not only to the industry's homophobia but also, via the interviews, to a neglected audience's desperate longing for any glimpse, any reflection on the screen, of the life it led. It's no longer a secret that many of the films in question were written, directed, or acted in by gay men and women, and that irony gives the picture a greater depth than you find in most Hollywood compilations.—B.D. (Village Theatre VII and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas; starting March 15.)

Chungking Express—Arriving on a rolling thunder of advance hype and an endorsement from Quentin Tarantino, this Hong Kong import—directed by Wong Kar-Wai—consists of two loosely connected stories about lovesick policemen captivated by mysterious women. One dame (Brigitte Lin Chin-Hsia) is a drug smuggler disguised in a blond wig and sunglasses, the other (Faye Wang) a kooky chicklet in a fast-food joint who swings her head as she listens endlessly to "California Dreamin'." Although the film snakes its way through the packed and labyrinthine shopping arcades of Hong Kong (there are few patches of natural light), "Chungking Express" is no romping, stomping John Woo–Jackie Chan blood-squib festival—it's a romantic comedy tickled silly by its own dopey cuteness. It dotes on its lonely-guy heroes as they dote on themselves. The first cop (Takeshi Kaneshiro) ponders the expiration dates on cans of pineapple, asking if love has a past-due date, too. The second (Tony Leung Chin-Wai) steps into his flooded apartment and wonders if it's been weeping in his absence. The film is so talky, repetitious, visually stuttery, and slackly paced that sitting through it once is like seeing it twice. For cultists only. In Cantonese and Mandarin.—J.W. (Angelika Film Center and Carnegie Hall Cinemas.)

City Hall—The overall aim of Harold Becker's ambitious political melodrama is to plunge the viewer into the chaos of municipal government, but the movie, like the New York City it portrays, never quite manages to satisfy all the conflicting interests that tug at it. Al Pacino (as the mayor), John Cusack (as an idealistic deputy mayor), and Danny Aiello (as a corrupt Brooklyn political boss) have the meatiest roles; the supporting cast is filled with terrific actors—notably Bridget Fonda, David Paymer, and Martin Landau—who have almost nothing to do.—T.R. (2/19/96) (Village East Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Murray Hill Cinemas, Beekman, Orpheum VII, Ziegfeld, and 84th Street Sixplex.)

Dead Man Walking—Tim Robbins's blunt, powerful movie tells the story of a murderer (Sean Penn) awaiting execution and a nun (Susan Sarandon) trying to save his soul—and, if possible, his skin. The filmmaker clearly hopes that familiarity with the grisly realities of capital punishment will finally breed contempt for the idea of premeditated, state-sponsored killing. And although the picture sometimes turns clunky and flat, as if it were sagging under the weight of its good intentions, it winds up being devastatingly effective. Penn has to reveal, within a reckless and apparently despicable character, a salvageable soul, and he makes the erratic rhythm of the condemned man's spiritual progress seem effortless and natural: he captures the languid, insinuating tempo of grace invading a locked-up spirit.—T.R. (1/8/96) (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Showplace, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Lincoln Square.)

From the Journals of Jean Seberg—Mary Beth Hurt has the title role in a drama about the life of the Iowa-born actress who died in 1979 at the age of forty. Written and directed by Mark Rappaport. (Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema.) (Cinema Village and Angelika 57.)

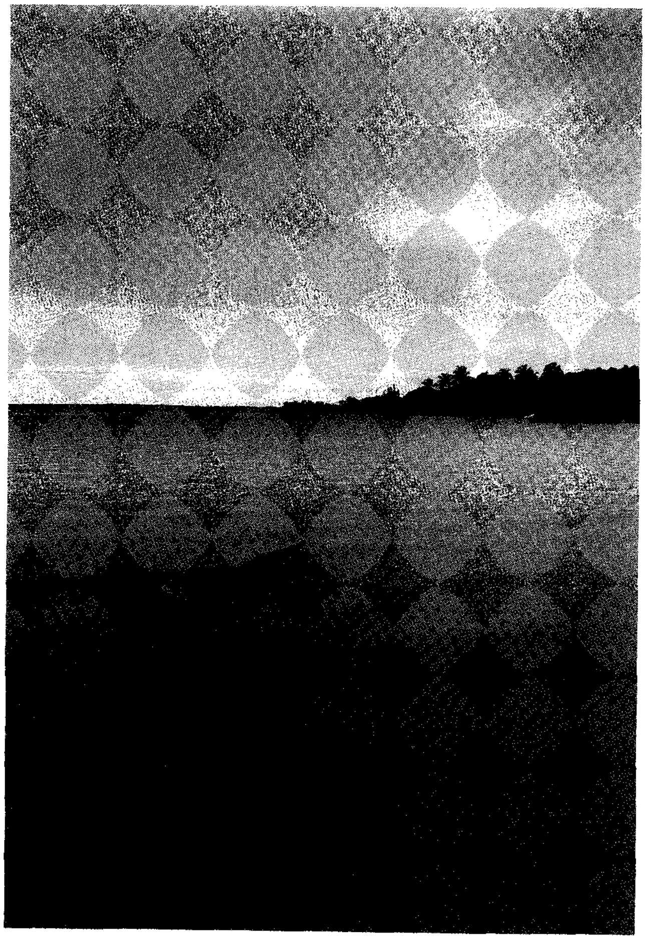
If Lucy Fell—A bleak, annoyingly quirky Gen-X recasting of the "When Harry Met Sally" notion that true love is based on friendship. Eric Schaeffer, who wrote and directed, also stars, as Joe, a painter who harbors an infantile crush on a gorgeous stranger (Elle Macpherson) while his roommate (Sarah Jessica Parker) carries on with a pompous downtown artist (Ben Stiller, hammy in dreadlocks). Parker is as charming as the script allows, but the plot is both contrived and morbid (the title refers to a red-herring suicide threat), and Joe is simply too self-absorbed to be sympathetic. It's not a good sign when Elle Macpherson plays the wise adult presence and outclasses the rest of the cast.—S.K. (Village Theatre VII, Gemini, Chelsea Cinemas, and Lincoln Square.)

Knocks at My Door—A spare, old-fashioned thriller about two nuns in a fictional Latin American town who risk execution when they shelter a fugitive. It was made in Venezuela in 1993, but the director, Alejandro Saderman, is from Argentina; maybe that's why the political backdrop feels so fuzzy and generic. (There's a civil war going on, but we never find out when it began or what it's about.) Only the tough performances by Veronica Oddo and Elba Escobar, as the nuns, take us beyond the didactic. In Spanish.—S.K. (Angelika 57; starting March 15.)

Leaving Las Vegas—In Mike Figgis's startlingly beautiful new movie, Nicolas Cage gives a great performance as a failed writer who is consciously drinking himself to death. Figgis tells the story as a series of vivid, intense moments; the sole trace of conventional drama is the hero's affair with a kindhearted young hooker (superbly played by Elisabeth Shue). But the possibility that love will rescue him from his fate vanishes quickly, like a mirage. Although the movie is terribly, crushingly sad, its honesty is invigorating: it names its poison and downs it, neat.—T.R. (11/6/95) (Village East Cinemas, 34th Street Showplace, First & 62nd Cinemas, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Olympia, and Criterion Center.)

Mighty Aphrodite—Woody Allen stars in his latest picture as Lenny, a New York sportswriter bored by his wife (Helena Bonham Carter) and attracted to a hooker (Mira Sorvino) who happens to be the mother—though she doesn't know it—of his adopted son. The movie treads enjoyably over old ground, though rather than cruising along with the ease of Allen's best work it tends to hobble, and it closes in a flurry of undecided endings. Sorvino's comic momentum rescues it. She offers the alarming prospect of sexual comedy without neurosis; you don't see *that* too often in a Woody Allen film.—A.L. (10/30/95) (68th St. Playhouse and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Mr. Holland's Opus—A film for the entire family, if you have no place else to leave them.



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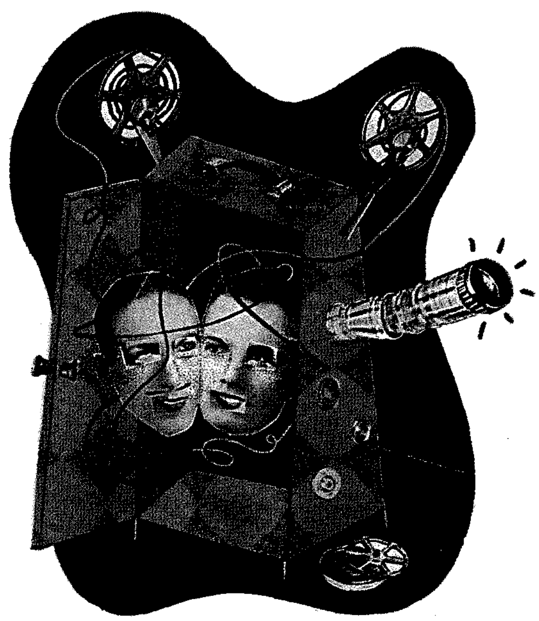
Richard Dreyfuss speaks gruffly and carries a little baton as Glenn Holland, a musician who aspires to be a serious composer but finds his true calling as a high-school teacher. Dreyfuss builds up a head of steam and ages persuasively, but the movie is shameless in its efforts to extract tears from the audience. Glenne Headly co-stars as Holland's chipmunk wife.—J.W. (1/29/96) (Murray Hill Cinemas, Cinema II, and Lincoln Square.)

The Postman—Antonio Skármeta's bittersweet 1985 novel, "Burning Patience," on which this movie is loosely based, told the story of Mario, a lonely postman who delivers mail to Pablo Neruda on Isla Negra, the corner of Chile where the poet spent much of his later life. In Michael Radford's lovely but sanitized version, the action has been moved to picturesque Italy. As Neruda, the great Philippe Noiret somehow conquers being dubbed in Spanish-accented Italian; as Mario, the late Italian comedian Massimo Troisi is painfully affecting. In Italian.—S.K. (Village East Cinemas, Eastside Playhouse, East 85th Street, Chelsea Cinemas, and Carnegie Hall Cinemas.)



Opening March 15, "The Celluloid Closet."

DAVID PLUNKERT

Rumble in the Bronx—If Jackie Chan's new American film, about stolen diamonds and the mob, lacks the inspired lunacy of his Hong Kong classics, it's still fine as a ninety-minute Jackie Chan primer; breaking an ankle during filming (he wears a cast painted as a sneaker) probably put a crimp in his artistry. While almost all of the actors are bad (they appear to have been cast mainly for how well their flying bodies can destroy the furniture), Chan has the beautiful, eager confidence of a movie star who loves his work. Directed by Stanley Tong.—B.D. (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Showplace, New York Twin, Orpheum VII, 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

Sense and Sensibility—The director, Ang Lee, and the screenwriter, Emma Thompson, turn Jane Austen's first published novel into a gracious and unfailingly pleasant entertainment. Thompson also plays the very sensible heroine, Elinor Dashwood, and carries the movie without overwhelming her fellow-actors. (Alan Rickman and Kate Winslet are especially good; the only clinker is a grotesquely mannered performance by Hugh Grant as Elinor's suitor.) If the picture pressed its temperate charms on us any harder, they would be much easier to resist.—T.R. (12/18/95) (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Lincoln Square.)

Up Close & Personal—It's blonde on blond as Michelle Pfeiffer and Robert Redford, playing a rookie TV reporter and a veteran newshound, dazzle each other (but not us) in a buttery romance directed by Jon Avnet. Sausaged into tight, tarty outfits, Pfeiffer's Tally Atwater is so anxious to please that she keeps spilling things, on air and off. Under the tutoring of Redford's Warren Justice, a news director whose rugged individualism seems right out of a J. Peterman catalog, she learns to breathe and treat the camera as her confidant. "She eats the lens," he marvels, in the movie's one memorable line. It's only a matter of script pages until their mentoring sessions turn into a peroxide explosion of movie-star amour. As Tally rises in the news biz, Warren dips, which makes things touchy in the love department—or would, if this movie took the trouble to invade their privacy. A neutered replay of "A Star Is Born," written by Joan Didion and John Gregory Dunne (who did the 1976 Barbra Streisand–Kris Kristofferson version), "Up Close & Personal" has no glamorous crackups or self-destructive lurches, though it does throw in a prison riot. Its lovers simply decouple and drift apart in zero gravity. (Redford winces to show he cares.) Squandered in supporting roles are Kate Nelligan, Stockard Channing, and Joe Mantegna, whose power suits seem to wear him.—J.W. (3/11/96) (Village East Cinemas, Cinema I, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, Guild, and Lincoln Square.)

The Young Poisoner's Handbook—In telling the true story of a fourteen-year-old English boy who poisoned his family, Benjamin Ross's début feature sets up a cartoonish, stylized household and then, bit by bit, humanizes its members' sufferings at the hands of the young psychopath. It's well directed and sincerely acted (Hugh O'Conor, who plays the boy, uses his wide-eyed elfin stare to great coldhearted effect), but the screenplay doesn't maintain the dark, discomfiting humor it strives for, and the drama becomes as dispassionate as its antihero's emotionless narration.—B.D. (Angelika Film Center and Cinema 3.)

ALSO PLAYING

ACROSS THE SEA OF TIME: Lincoln Square. . . . **ANGELS & INSECTS** (reviewed in our issue of 1/29/96): Village Theatre VII and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **ANNE FRANK REMEMBERED:** Quad Cinema and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **ANTONIA'S LINE:** Angelika Film Center. . . . **APOLLO 13** (7/10/95): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **BEAUTIFUL GIRLS:** Angelika Film Center, Sutton, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, and 84th Street Sixplex. . . . **BEFORE AND AFTER:** Village East Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, Cinema 3rd Avenue, 86th Street East Twin, 84th Street Sixplex, and Embassy 1. . . . **BRAVEHEART** (6/5/95): Tower East. . . . **CASINO** (12/4/95): National Twin. . . . **THE CITY OF LOST CHILDREN:** Angelika Film Center. . . . **DOWN PERISCOPE:** Village East Cinemas, Gotham Cinema, Orpheum VII, 23rd St. West Triplex, Regency, and National Twin. . . . **FARGO:** 19th Street East 6, New York Twin, Art Greenwich Twin, and Lincoln Square. . . . **THE FLOWER OF MY SECRET:** Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **FRENCH TWIST** (1/15/96): Quad Cinema. . . . **GET SHORTY** (10/23/95): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **GOLDENEYE** (11/27/95): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **HAPPY GILMORE:** Manhattan Twin and Park & 86th Street Cinemas. . . . **HATE (LA HAINE):** Village Theatre VII. . . . **HEAT** (12/25/95-1/1/96): Criterion Center. . . . **HEAVY METAL:** Waverly, 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center. . . . **HELLRAISER: BLOODLINE:** 19th Street East 6, 59th Street East Cinema, Orpheum VII, Waverly, 84th Street Sixplex, and Astor Plaza. . . . **HOMEWARD BOUND II: LOST IN SAN FRANCISCO:** Village East Cinemas, Sutton, 86th Street East Twin, 23rd St. West Triplex, Lincoln Square, Olympia, and Embassy 2. . . . **LAMERICA:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **LAST SUMMER IN THE HAMPTONS:** Angelika 57. . . . **MARY REILLY:** Gemini, 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center. . . . **MUPPET TREASURE ISLAND:** Village East Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, 86th Street East Twin, Lincoln Square, and Olympia. . . . **THE NEON BIBLE:** Quad Cinema. . . . **NICO ICON:** Film Forum. . . . **NIXON:** Embassy 4. . . . **NUEBA YOL:** Embassy 3. . . . **ONCE UPON A TIME . . . WHEN WE WERE COLORED:** First & 62nd Cinemas. . . . **PERSUASION** (9/25/95): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **RESTORATION:** 62nd & Broadway. . . . **SABRINA** (12/25/95-1/1/96): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **SEVEN:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE STAR MAKER:** Paris. . . . **TAXI DRIVER:** Film Forum. . . . **12 MONKEYS** (1/22/96): 23rd St. West Triplex. . . . **UNFORGETTABLE:** Criterion Center. . . . **THE WHITE BALLOON:** Quad Cinema and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

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(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

EAST SIDE

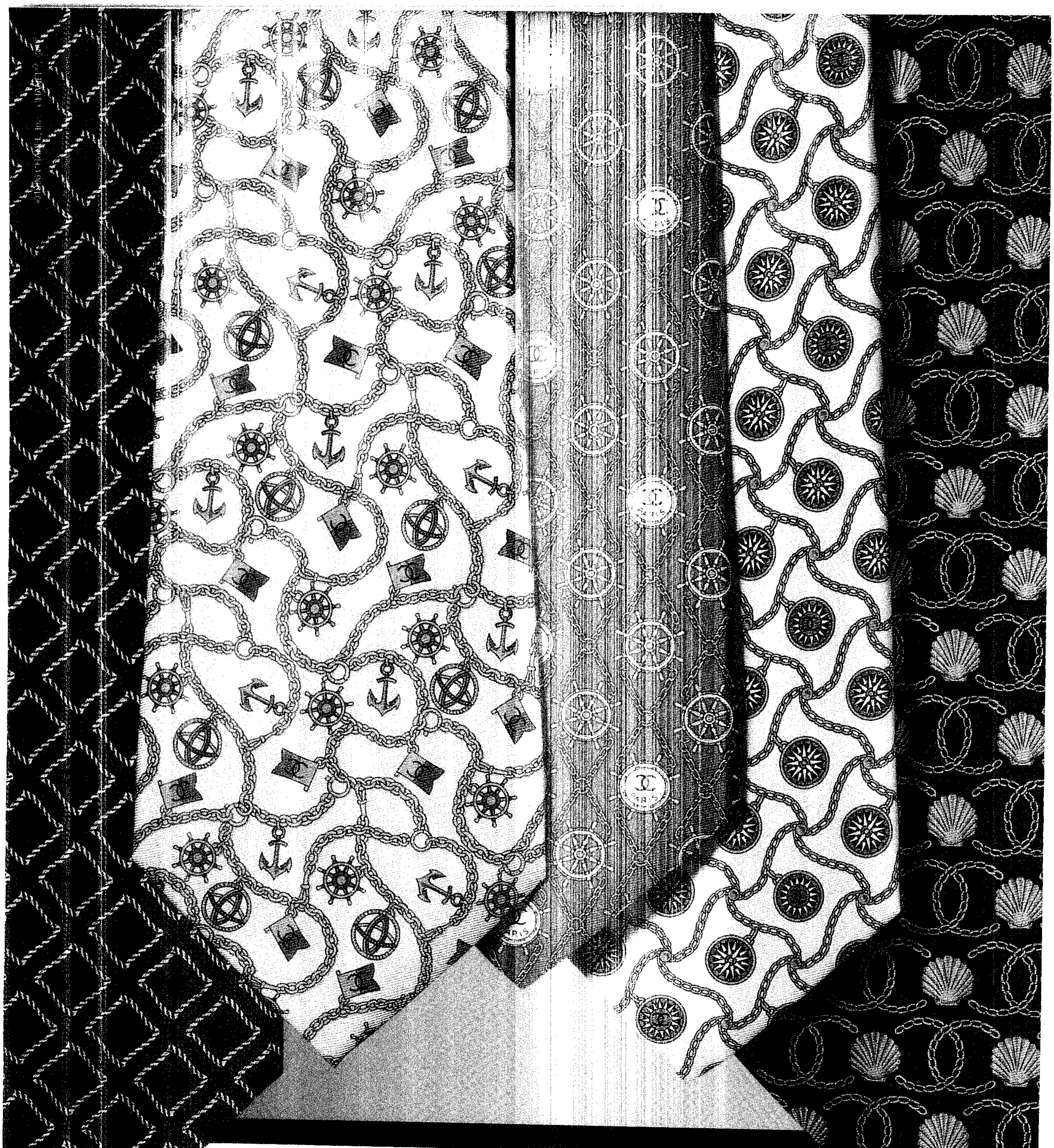
Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th St.
34th St. East, 241 E. 34th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Manhattan Twin, Third Ave. at 59th St.
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Baronet and Coronet, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Cinema I, Cinema II, and Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
Gemini 1 and 2, Second Ave. at 64th St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
68th St. Playhouse, Third Ave. at 68th St.
Tower East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
86th Street East Twin, Third Ave. at 86th St.

WEST SIDE

Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
23rd St. West Triplex, 333 W. 23rd St.
Guild, 33 W. 50th St.
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.
Carnegie Hall Cinemas, Seventh Ave. between 56th and 57th Sts.
Angelika 57, 225 W. 57th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St.
Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (757-2280).
Regency, Broadway at 67th St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.

TIMES SQUARE AREA

Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
Criterion Center, Broadway at 44th St.
Embassy 1, Broadway at 46th St.
Embassy 2, 3, and 4, Seventh Ave. at 47th St.
National Twin, Broadway at 44th St.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REVIVALS

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael, Terrence Rafferty, and Michael Sragow. Theatre addresses and phone numbers appear with the listings following these notes.)

Akira Kurosawa's Dreams (1990)—Not one of its eight segments feels like a real dream. The kind of power that Kurosawa aims for, and intermittently achieves, in this picture is less oneiric than ceremonial. The second half is weak, but there's greatness in the film's first hour. The third segment, "The Blizzard," about four men trapped in a snowstorm, is all snow, howling-wind effects, and bleak, undifferentiated vistas of despair, until Kurosawa pulls a miracle out of the white void; a woman in long black hair and diaphanous robes appears to the party's leader as he battles sleep. It's a transcendent image, perhaps the most piercing ever made of the desires that keep people from surrendering to death. In Japanese.—T.R. (Museum of Modern Art; March 16 and March 18.)

At MOMA, Kinuyo Tanaka in "The Life of Oharu."

HIROSHI TANABE

Breathless (1959)—Jean-Luc Godard's first feature—a witty, romantic, innovative chase picture with the twenty-six-year-old Jean-Paul Belmondo as a Parisian hood, and Jean Seberg as the American girl who casually lives with him and just as casually turns him in to the police when he becomes an inconvenience. Godard, who dedicated this film (made for $90,000) to Monogram Pictures, saw something in the cheap American gangster movies of his youth that French movies lacked; he poeticized it and made it so modern (via fast jump-cutting) that he, in turn, became the key influence on American movies in the sixties. Here, he brought together disharmonious elements—irony and slapstick and defeat—and brought the psychological effects of moviegoing into the movie itself. (His hero was probably the first to imitate Bogart.) The film is light and playful and off-the-cuff, even a little silly. Yet the giddy, gauche characters who don't give a damn—the hood who steals a car, kills a highway patrolman, and chases after some money that is owed him for past thefts so he and his impervious, passively butch girl can get to Italy—are not only familiar in an exciting, revealing way, they are terribly *attractive*. The well-known director Jean-Pierre Melville appears as a celebrity being interviewed; Daniel Boulanger appears as the police inspector. Jean-Louis Richard and Philippe de Broca turn up, and there are also bit appearances by Godard, as an informer, by Truffaut (who supplied the news item on which Godard based the script), and by Chabrol (who lent his name as supervising producer). In French.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; March 15-18.)

Rashomon (1951)—In ninth-century Kyoto, a nobleman's bride is raped by a bandit; the nobleman is murdered, or possibly he is a suicide. This double crime is acted out four times, in the versions of the three participants, each giving an account that increases the prestige of his conduct, and in the version of a woodcutter who witnessed the episode. Continuously reconstructing the crime, "Rashomon" asks, How can we ever know the truth? This great enigmatic film was directed by Akira Kurosawa, from stories by Ryunosuke Akutagawa. With Machiko Kyo, Toshiro Mifune as the bandit, Masayuki Mori as the samurai, and Takashi Shimura as the woodcutter. In Japanese.—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; March 16 and March 18.)

A Streetcar Named Desire (1951)—Vivien Leigh gives one of those rare performances that can truly be said to evoke pity and terror. As Blanche DuBois, she looks and acts like a destroyed Dresden shepherdess. No one since the early Lillian Gish and the almost unknown, plaintive Nadia Sibirskaya of "Ménilmontant" (1926) has had this quality of hopeless, feminine frailty; Shakespeare must have had a woman like this in mind when he conceived Ophelia. Blanche's plea "I don't want realism . . . I want magic!" is central to "Streetcar." When Marlon Brando, as the

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realist Stanley Kowalski, cuts through her pretensions and responds to her flirting with a direct sexual assault, the system of illusions that holds her together breaks down, and he is revealed as a man without compassion—both infant and brute. Elia Kazan's direction is often stagy, the sets and the arrangement of actors are frequently too transparently "worked out," but who cares when you're looking at two of the greatest performances ever put on film and listening to some of the finest dialogue ever written by an American? When Vivien Leigh says "The Tarantula Arms!" or "It's Della Robbia blue," you know how good Tennessee Williams can be. With Kim Hunter and Karl Malden.—P.K. (American Museum of the Moving Image; March 16.)

UGETSU (1953)—This subtle, violent yet magical film is one of the most amazing of the Japanese movies that played American art houses after the international success of "Rashomon" in 1951. The director, Kenji Mizoguchi, handles the narrative in two styles: barbaric sequences dealing with greed and civil war that seem realistic except that the characters are deliberately animalistic and are symbolically acting out the bestial side of man; and highly stylized sequences dealing with the aesthetic, luxurious, and romantic modes of life. When the hero (Masayuki Mori), a grunting peasant potter, develops self-awareness and becomes an artist, the meanings multiply. The film is upsetting and unspeakably cruel at times, and then so suggestive and haunting that it's confounding. When, in the midst of serene elegance, the phantom Lady Wakasa (Machiko Kyo) offers the potter-artist rarefied sensual delights, you know how he feels as he cries, "I never imagined such pleasures existed!" Heavy going in spots, but with marvellous passages that are worth a bit of patience. With Kinuyo Tanaka as the potter's wife. In Japanese.—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; March 14 and March 17.)

WOMAN IN THE DUNES (1964)—Hiroshi Teshigahara's erotic parable belongs to the "Collector" genre of weird-seduction fiction. The residents of an isolated seaside hamlet force an amateur entomologist (Eiji Okada) from Tokyo into becoming the helper—and mate—of a Sisyphus-like woman (Kyoko Kishida) who lives in an inaccessible pit between towering dunes. The two shovel the sand out of her bunker every night and send it up a rope the next day. Freed from urban constraints, the man grows to find their oppressive existence honest, even liberating. Kobo Abé wrote this adaptation of his 1960 novel, and it shows you what once led John Updike to state that Abé's no-exit situations make for "cheap suspense" and "readerly exasperation." But the film's harsh sensualism transcends the irritations of the plot. Teshigahara has a talent for spare, stylized imagery: in some scenes flesh takes on the pulsating currents of the dunes, the wind, and the sea. When the man and woman stroke the sand off each other, they are undressing already naked bodies. (The picture made Teshigahara the only Japanese filmmaker besides Kurosawa to be nominated for the best-director Oscar.)—M.S. (Museum of Modern Art; March 14 and March 19.)

LATE RUNS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

FILM FORUM 2, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Through March 14: "Who Killed Teddy Bear?" (1965, Joseph Cates). . . . ¶ Films starring Jean Seberg. March 15-18: "Breathless" (†). . . . March 19: "Let No Man Write My Epitaph" (1960, Philip Leacock) and "Pendulum" (1969, George Schaefer).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—March 14 at 2:30 and March 17 at 5: "The Life of Oharu" (1952, Kenji Mizoguchi; in Japanese), with Kinuyo Tanaka. . . . ¶ March 14 at 6 and March 17 at 2:30: "Ugetsu" (†). . . . ¶ March 14-15 at 6: Silent films starring Asta Nielsen. With non-English intertitles and live English voice-overs. . . . ¶ March 14 at 8 and March 19 at 2:30: "Woman in the Dunes" (†). . . . ¶ March 15 at 2:30: "Tokyo Story" (1953, Yasujiro Ozu; in Japanese). . . . ¶ March 15 and March 19 at 6: "Ohayo" (1959, Ozu; in Japanese). . . . ¶ March 15 at 8: "Late Spring" (1949, Ozu; in Japanese). . . . ¶ March 15 at 8 and March 16 at 2: "100 Years of Japanese Cinema" (1995, Nagisa Oshima; in Japanese). . . . ¶ March 16 at 2 and March 18 at 6: "Rashomon" (†). . . . ¶ March 16 at 5 and March 18 at 2:30: "Akira Kurosawa's Dreams" (†). . . . ¶ March 16 at 5 and March 17 at 4: "The Typewriter, the Rifle and the Movie Camera" (1995, Adam Smith), a documentary on Samuel Fuller. . . . ¶ March 18 at 6: "Fantômas, Parts 1 and 2" (1913-14, Louis Feuillade; silent, with French intertitles). . . . ¶ March 19 at 6: "Fantômas, Part 3."

WALTER READE THEATRE, Lincoln Center, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level (875-5600)—Films by Krzysztof Kieślowski. March 13 at 2 and 6:30: "The Decalogue, Parts 7 and 8" (1988; in Polish). . . . March 13 at 4:15 and 8:45: "White" (1993; in Polish and French). . . . March 14 at 2 and 6:30: "The Decalogue, Parts 9 and 10" (1988; in Polish). . . . March 14 at 4:15 and 8:45: "Red" (1994, in French). . . . ¶ A program of recent French films; all in French, with English subtitles. March 15 at 2 and 6:15 and March 16 at 6:15: "A Girl Alone" (Benôit Jacquot). . . . March 15 at 4 and 8:45 and March 17 at 9: "Diary of a Seducer" (Danièle Dubroux). . . . March 16 at 4 and 8:45: "Madame Petlet's True Story" (Camille de Casabianca). . . . March 17 at 4: "Haut Bas Fragile" (Jacques Rivette). . . . March 17 at 7:10 and March 19 at 2: "L'Univers de Jacques Demy" (Agnès Varda). . . . ¶ Weekend showings for children. March 16-17 at 2: "The Phantom Tollbooth" (1969, Chuck Jones, Abe Levitow, and David Monahan).

A DIFFERENT LIGHT BOOKSTORE, 151 W. 19th St. (989-4850)—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). On March 17 at 7, the feature will be "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes" (1953, Howard Hawks), with Jane Russell, Marilyn Monroe, and Charles Coburn.

SYMPHONY SPACE, Broadway at 95th St. (864-5400)—March 19 at 7: "The 400 Blows" (1959, François Truffaut; in French), with Jean-Pierre Léaud. . . . March 19 at 9: "An Autumn Afternoon" (1962, Yasujiro Ozu; in Japanese).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—A program of films from Morocco. March 14 at 8:30: "An American in Tangiers" (1994, Mohamed Uland-Mohand; in French, English, Arabic, and Spanish) and "Paul Bowles: The Complete Outsider" (1993, Catherine Warnow and Regina Weinreich). . . . March 15 at 12:30 and 8:30: "Looking for My Wife's Husband" (1993, Mohamed Adderrahman Tazi; in Arabic). . . . March 15 at 3:15: "Return to Oulad Moumen" (1994, Izza Genini). . . . March 15 at 10:15: "Trances" (1981, Ahmed El Maanouni; in Arabic). . . . March 19 at 12:30, 3:15, 6, and 8:45: "A Door to the Sky" (1989, Farida Ben Lyazid; in Arabic).

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (1-718 784-0077)—Films starring Marlon Brando. March 16 at 2: "The Men" (1950, Fred Zinnemann). . . . March 16 at 4: "A Streetcar Named Desire" (†). . . . March 17 at 2: "The Wild One" (1954, Laslo Benedek). . . . March 17 at 4: "Julius Caesar" (1953, Joseph L. Mankiewicz).

MUSEUM OF TELEVISION AND RADIO, 25 W. 52nd St. (621-6800)—Television work by John Frankenheimer. Through March 17: "Bail Out at Forty-three Thousand" (1955) and "Bomber's Moon" (1958), with Bob Cummings. . . . From March 19: "To Wake at Midnight" (1955), with Wendell Corey, and "The American" (1960).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5181)—Through March 24: "Fate" (1994, Fred Kelemen).

WHITNEY MUSEUM, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-0537)—Through April 7: Films by Gregory J. Markopoulos (1928-92).

BROOKLYN MUSEUM, Eastern Parkway. (1-718 638-5000)—A program of films from Latin America. March 15 at 7: "Patakin!" (1982, Manuel Octavio Gomez; a Cuban film, in Spanish). . . . March 16-17 at 2: "The Language of Foxes" (1992, Federico Garcia Hurtado; a Peruvian film, in Spanish).

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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

WHAT CAMPAIGN?

Now that Bob Dole has swept the primaries on Junior Tuesday, brought Lamar Alexander and Dick Lugar back to their senses, and knocked off Steve Forbes in New York, the punditocracy has rendered its collective judgment: the Republican campaign is basically over. The real question, however, is whether there ever was, in any traditional sense, a Republican campaign in the first place. In a year when the candidates have been almost universally allergic to ideas but have spoken ceaselessly about the mechanics of the race, from advertising and polling to fund-raising, it's hard to duck the conclusion that what was ending was actually a meta-campaign, and a thin one at that.

It started last year, when the need to raise vast sums in a hurry induced several candidates to demonstrate their fund-raising prowess publicly. "I have the most reliable friend you can have in American politics, and that's ready money," Phil Gramm announced, apparently unaware that an appealing personality might have helped more. By the time the Iowa caucuses rolled around, Gramm was flagging, and the focus of the race had shifted to nasty advertising. Dole attacked the negative spots produced by Forbes, saying that they were false and, worse, had driven his "positive ratings" into the dirt. Forbes retorted that Dole was no saint himself, but a few days later, in New Hampshire, Forbes "went positive" and suggested that the decision to change his advertising strategy demonstrated his growth as a candidate. (He finished fourth.) In a televised debate in South Carolina, the self-referential nature of the campaign hit a new height, when the candidates were shown a series of negative ads and were asked to critique them, Siskel-and-Ebert style. "It's probably very good," Dole said, in anticipation of an ad in which he called Pat Buchanan "extreme." Forbes opined coolly, "It looks like it might have been taken out of context," and Alexander scolded, "I think Bob Dole is wrong to call Pat Buchanan a name."

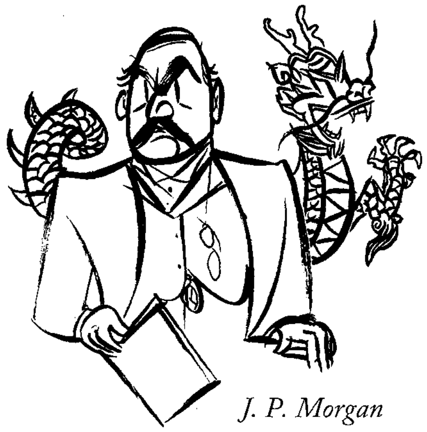
ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

In many ways, Alexander was the most meta of the serious candidates. He claimed that his "positive" ad campaign, and his willingness to appear on television more readily than Dole, made him more Presidential. But the remaining candidates have had their share of meta-fides, too. Buchanan, of course, is a former political operative and media analyst who now brags that his campaign needs no political operatives or media analysts (meta with a wink), while Dole tends to comment on the campaign (and on commentary on the campaign, and on someone named Bob Dole, and on commentary on someone named Bob Dole) in a manner so postmodern it makes your head spin.

At a moment when many conservatives routinely spout grandiose, and sometimes serious, schemes to redefine the role of government in American life, it's no small irony that the apparent Republican nominee often intones, "It's about ideas," and then fails to enumerate a single one. (Very meta, this: talking about having ideas without talking about the ideas themselves.) What remains to be seen is how well Dole's issueless, process-driven rhetoric will hold up against Bill Clinton, a fellow with five policies for every two problems, and a way of talking about them that makes him sound like a President, not a political consultant.

EMBARRASSMENT OF RICHES

Next week, the Metropolitan Museum will unveil an exhibition entitled "Splendors of Imperial China: Treasures from the National Palace Museum, Taipei." The show will mark the first time that virtually all the masterpieces of the Chinese imperial collection—Neolithic jades, Sung porcelain and landscapes, imperial portraits from the tenth century through the fifteenth—have been displayed at one time outside Taiwan.



J. P. Morgan

The emperors themselves collected these works in the course of more than a thousand years. The exhibition catalogue notes, "There is no other collection in the world, either private or public, that can boast such a long, albeit checkered, history." But there is one square on the checkerboard that scarcely anyone has ever known about: eighty-three years ago, the Met came close to owning the entire collection that it is now so proudly excerpting.

In 1992, a British scholar named Michael Frances stumbled across a slim file in the archives of the Morgan Library marked "Chi." Inside, he discovered correspondence between Frances H. Mc-

Knight, an American diplomat stationed in China, and H. P. Davison, J. P. Morgan's most trusted partner. The first cable, written in code and dated March 8, 1913, begins, "Strictly confidential. Imperial family are preparing to sell for own account and in entirety palace collections including pearls, bronzes, porcelains, etc." McKnight asserted that Morgan could secure "first option" on the entire treasure and concluded, "Important we should have an answer as soon as possible." Within twenty-four hours, Davison cabled back, "Send further particulars."

THE idea of one man's buying the entire national patrimony of one of the world's great civilizations seems absurd, not to mention impious. Yet both China scholars and Morgan experts agree that the deal could have been consummated. In February of 1912, the ruling Qing dynasty had stepped aside in favor of a nominally republican government, though it was granted the right to remain in the Forbidden City and to keep all its property, including the royal treasure. The deposed emperor, Pu Yi (immortalized in Bertolucci's "The Last Emperor"), describes in his memoirs "an orgy of looting" as eunuchs and nobles—and the Emperor himself—plundered the apparently bottomless royal treasure; to this day, no one knows exactly how much was stolen or sold. And, if the imperial family had the inclination to sell, there's no question that Morgan had the means, and the proclivity, to buy. In the previous twenty years, he had bought antiquities, Renaissance bronzes, faience and majolica, coins and precious metals, medieval carvings and statuary, illuminated manuscripts, and, of course, Old Master paintings and drawings—often entire collections. And he was, at the time, the president and chief patron of the Metropolitan Museum.

How much would Morgan have paid for the collection? McKnight laid out a proposed deal in which Morgan would have the whole caboodle sent to London for appraisal, make a loan to the imperial family equal to half its value, and then buy as much of it as he chose. McKnight noted that "any estimate value collections must necessarily be guess, but impression seems to be that Mukden worth 2,000,000 gold dollars, Jehol Peking 1,000,000 each." These three palaces together contained the entire collection. Is it possible that the imperial family was prepared to sell China's artistic heritage for four million dollars?

Perhaps McKnight was the victim of some kind of hoax, but it seems not; in one memorandum, he observes that he will be dealing with "Mr. Shi Shu." Shih Hsu, to use the current spelling, was the controller, or Grand Guardian, of the court's Household Department, which made him, in effect, the curator of the royal collection, and one of the highest-ranking officials in the Forbidden City. On March 27, 1913, McKnight informed Davison that Shih Hsu had confirmed that the imperial family was ready to sell the contents of the Mukden and Jehol Palaces (the Peking sale had been "postponed"), and that China's president and chief warlord had given his blessing, subject to ultimate approval by the National Assembly.

The March 27th letter is the last entry in the folder in the Morgan archives. Five days later, J. P. Morgan died, at the age of seventy-five, in a vast suite at the Grand Hotel in Rome. In February, Morgan had suffered a nervous collapse while inspecting the monumental digs that he had financed in Egypt. It is possible that he never knew of the negotiations conducted in his name in Beijing. Morgan had less interest in Asian than in European art, but his acquisitive passion surely would have been piqued if the experts he depended on had told him that the collection contained the finest works of an ancient imperial culture. Had he lived, would he have bought them? It's only a what-if; but it's one of the most tantalizing what-ifs in the history of art collecting.

INHERIT THE ZEALOTS

AT the William E. Grady Technical Vocational High School, in Brighton Beach, some fifty eleventh and twelfth graders recently took a break from their courses in automotive mechanics and cabinet-making and computer engineering to discuss "Inherit the Wind," Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee's 1955 play about the Scopes "monkey" trial, which is being revived on Broadway by the National Actors Theatre. The students had read the play for their English classes—all of it except the verdict—and the next day they were going on a field trip to see a preview of the show, which opens on March 18th. The play, about a public-school teacher who is arrested for teaching evolution, is set "not too long ago" in a small town in Tennessee, but, as Bert Goldstein, an actor and director who teaches in the theatre's high-school outreach program, explained, the events could easily take place in the not too distant future. "Fights continue over the morality of teaching evolution, and textbooks are still being banned," Goldstein told the students. He then read from a newspaper clipping: "On February 21, 1996, the Tennessee Senate approved a resolution that urges homes, businesses, and schools to post and observe the Ten Commandments, despite the opinion of the Attorney General that the measure is unconstitutional. A state senate committee has also approved a bill that would allow school boards to dismiss teachers who teach evolution as fact rather than theory." One student asked, "Can they dismiss teachers who teach *religion* as fact rather than theory?" Two Muslim students in kaffiyehs snickered.

Tony Randall

At the Royale Theatre the following afternoon, nine hundred or so high-school students wriggled in their red velvet seats and speculated on the verdict. Nearly all the kids from Grady assumed that Bertram Cates, the character based on Scopes, would be found not guilty. An announcement came over the loudspeaker: "The role of Henry Drummond"—the defense attorney, who was modelled on Clarence Darrow—"which is usually played by George C. Scott, will be played today by his understudy, Tony Randall." The students whooped and clapped appreciatively: Randall started the outreach program that had brought them to the theatre. When he appeared onstage, a kid in the front row whispered, "The man from 'The Odd Couple' is up there!"

Randall has said that kids make the best audience, and, sure enough, they cheered Drummond on as he mounted

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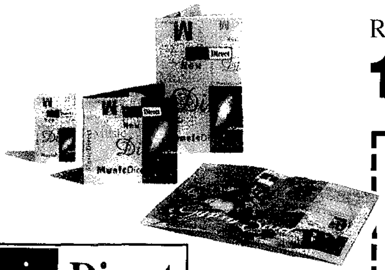

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his legal arguments and groaned whenever Matthew Harrison Brady (played by Charles Durning and based on the populist Presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan) mentioned "Evil-ution." After the umpteenth "Amen!" from the vehement spectators in the courtroom, one girl murmured, "I wish they'd shut up."

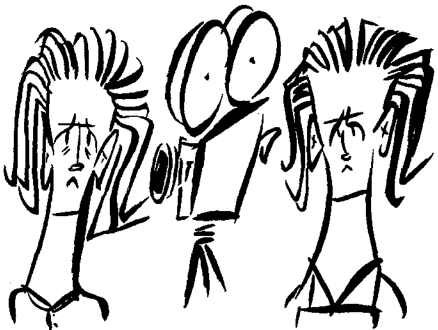
By intermission, the students' belief that Cates would get off was beginning to waver. Yogita Balram, a slight young woman with long brown hair, was confident that the townspeople's better natures would prevail. "Something will touch them," she predicted, "and they will change their minds." Kereen Henry, who wore a velvet hat pulled down over her eyebrows, was less sanguine. "People are prejudiced against Cates," she said. "They're ignorant. They don't use their minds." When, in fact, Cates was pronounced guilty, one kid remarked in disgust, "That law was *stupid!*"

After the performance, Randall and the rest of the cast answered questions about the play. "I was in the original," Randall said. (He played the reporter based on H. L. Mencken—Gene Kelly's role in the 1960 movie version.) "At that time, the religious right seemed like a lunatic fringe. But Pat Buchanan has said that 'godless evolution' should not be taught in school. The play is much more timely today than it was when it was written." One student asked Randall why, at the end, he had placed the Bible on top of Darwin's "Origin of Species" rather than the other way around. Randall replied, "Did I do that?" Several kids answered yes. "Well, I didn't mean to," he said. "Drummond is supposed to weigh the two books in his hands as if they were equal and then slap them together." Randall paused and looked thoughtful, as if weighing the two books again in his mind.

BROTHERS FROM ANOTHER PLANET

"THIS is the hippest party I've been to on either coast in a long time," says Gill Holland, the editor of *Ciné-BLAST!*, many of whose featured filmmakers are sipping wine nearby. Holland measures the hipness of a party by the number of guests who know Michael Stipe. "It's like Warhol in the old days," he adds. The presence of two Stipe acquaintances—Katherine Dieckmann, who directed two R.E.M. videos, and J. Morgan Puett, whose clothes the band wears—makes this event very cool, in Holland's mind. At the same time, it's as if everyone here were trying to impress everyone else with how little money they make. Fame is definitely out.

Which certainly pleases the camera-shy Brothers Quay, in whose honor this gathering of the not too famous is being held, at Puett's showroom, on Wooster Street. The forty-something identical-twin American animators are here on a rare visit to promote their first live-action feature film, "Institute Benjamenta," opening at Film Forum on March 13th. The movie follows the erotically frustrated adventures of an insecure young man who voluntarily enrolls in a decrepit school for servants run by a pederastic, deer-hoofed professor and his beautiful sister, and is based on the 1909 novel "Jakob von Gunten," by the Swiss schizophrenic Robert Walser. The Quays live and work together in London, avoiding popular culture and choreographing broken antique dolls, garlic skins, rusty nails, dusty feathers, and pieces of liver to atonal, mostly Eastern European music. Puett's showroom has a similarly Brothers Grimm aura, the elective affinities being oily, thickly cabled ropes dangling through three stories of space, old meat hooks stuck in the ceiling, baby-doll outfits, and a rusty merry-go-round. Nobody sits on it.


The Brothers Quay

In this space, people come and go, talking about Tarantino. But the Quays stand stiffly or shift swiftly, avoiding the lens of Tom LeGoff, who is composing shots from within a circular rack of expensive transparent dresses. The Quays can be quite rude. When the actress Brooke Smith ("Vanya on 42nd Street") asks them if they're happy with their new film, they react as if she'd pulled a gun on them, and Timothy Quay (the other is Stephen) shouts, spraying spittle, "You can't ask us that!" The Quays class as idiots people who categorize their work under any "ism." But they get away with their bad manners, because they are not commercially successful—which makes them the darlings of the British Film Institute–Film Four–*Guardian* axis—and because they're thin, wiry, pale, long-haired, and British-accented (if you cross your eyes, you see Daniel Day-Lewis times four). They're also performance artists, with the circusy, Dostoyevskian reversal of their name, their too tight gray suits, their habit of finishing each other's sentences, and their mouse-gray, gravity-defying hair, stiffened with puppeteer's mucilage so that it shoots straight back.

As the cowbell on Puett's door clangs for the last time, the Quays march, Groucho-like, toward a waiting car—they look like the star puppet in their film of Bruno Schulz's "The Street of Crocodiles." A black dog bounds past them in the night. They take no notice.

MORNINGSIDE BITES

THE college-bound Brooklyn teenager had been lulled into letting his urban guard down by a succession of congenial and openly helpful admissions officers, who responded to his phone calls with a gush of enthusiasm. They all seemed to want him to attend their institutions. At Harvard, a sweet-voiced administrator went out of her way to tell the youth how he could arrange for a tour of the campus. Swarthmore mailed pamphlets, maps, and train schedules, then wished him a nice day. Wesleyan showed interest in his aspirations, Princeton told him the best place to have lunch, and Oberlin invited him to join the baseball team. Then he called a home-town school, Columbia. First, he encountered a machine, which explained that all the lines were busy. When he called again, a live person said that whatever he wanted to do couldn't be done. On a third call, a stressed-out employee said, in a familiar snarl, "Could you possibly talk a little *lower!*"

Thus began a higher education. ◆

"What Campaign?" John Heilemann; "Embarrassment of Riches," James Traub; "Inherit the Zealots," Sara Mosle; "Brothers from Another Planet," Diane Rafferty; "Morningside Bites," Ken Gross.

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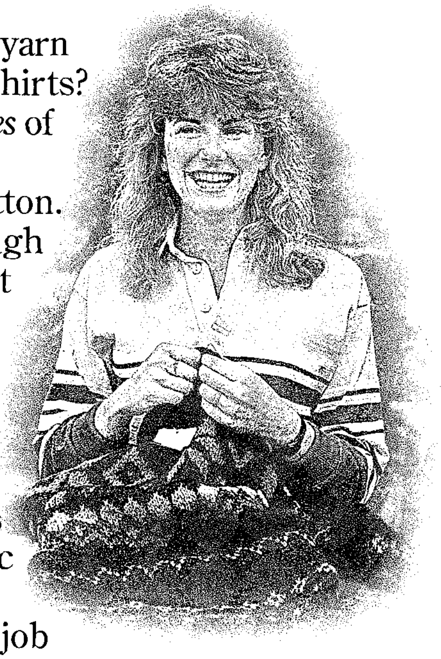

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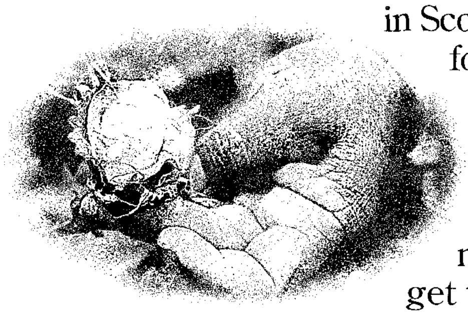

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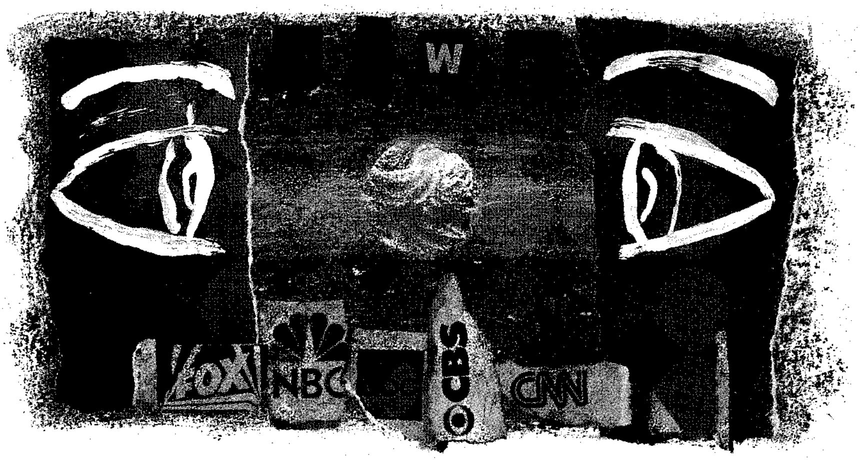
ANNALS OF COMMUNICATIONS

THE NEWS RUSH

Why are the networks so eager to invade CNN's turf?

BY KEN AULETTA

LAST October, the top executives of NBC and of Microsoft met on the fifty-second floor of 30 Rockefeller Plaza to talk about a dramatic news partnership. Talks between the two companies had been going on for months: the previous May, NBC tiptoed into cyberspace by signing a contract with Microsoft to supply programming to desktop computers. But what was under discussion last October was far more significant: a proposal for Microsoft to invest millions in becoming an equal partner with NBC in a worldwide, twenty-four-hour cable news channel and an interactive on-line news service—both produced by NBC News.



Is the twenty-four-hour cable news format still the future or already the past?

EUGÈNE MIHAESCO

The executives—among them Robert Wright, the president and C.E.O. of NBC, Bill Gates, the chairman and C.E.O. of Microsoft, and several deputies—munched potato chips as they listened to a presentation by Andrew Lack, the president of NBC News. Occasionally, they were distracted by what they saw on the soundless TV monitor; it was, coincidentally, the day of the Million Man March, and cameras were recording the activities of nearly half a million black men who had assembled.

NBC had its own army out to cover this event, including fifteen network cameras, thirty-five local and network correspondents, a helicopter, and the "NBC Nightly News" anchor, Tom Brokaw. During the meeting, Brokaw was put on the speakerphone, and he described things that NBC's cameras were recording but were not getting on the air. He also spoke about time constraints that frustrated those who worked in network news, and about the ways that NBC might make available to viewers and computer users everything it had collected that day.

"If we had a relationship today," Brokaw recalls saying, "both of us would be on the air twenty-four hours a day and you could put on the Microsoft Network a database and report how many people showed up and the text of each of the speeches. It would be a real synergy between what's on the computer screen and what's on the TV screen. We wouldn't have to spend a dime more to put this on the air."

That the meeting and the march occurred on the same day produced an epiphany for Gates, I was told by Peter Neupert, Microsoft's vice-president for strategic partnerships, who had led the discussions for Microsoft. That meeting was the first that Gates had attended. "We were very focussed on what we could do in the on-line world," Neupert recalls. "Cable was the piece that clicked that day." NBC's Wright says, "What happened at the meeting was that Bill signed off on the concept." In December, the network announced its partnership with Microsoft.

The idea of the twenty-four-hour cable news channel has had a long gestation; before Ted Turner originated CNN, in June of 1980, all three networks had considered starting their own versions. ABC even launched, but then abandoned, a news network with Westinghouse. "Ted Turner told me once that if we'd stayed with it another month, he would have been forced to back out," Roone Arledge, the president of ABC News, says. In those days, the networks disparaged CNN as "visual wallpaper," and, over the next few years, spurned overtures to buy CNN or form a partnership with it, sneering at the size of the audience. CNN reaches, on average, some five hundred thousand viewers, in contrast to twenty-five million collectively reached by the nightly newscasts of the networks.

Now the networks, led by NBC, have begun to covet a franchise that once belonged only to CNN. This winter, ABC and Fox rushed to announce their own news channels. Peter Lund, the president and C.E.O. of CBS, says, "I think we'll be disadvantaged if all our competitors have a cable news channel and we don't." When Lund and Rupert Murdoch, the chairman of the News Corporation, appeared together to lobby Congress last fall, the two agreed to set up a top-secret joint task force to explore merging their news efforts in order to create a twenty-four-hour cable service.

The economics of this sudden fascination with twenty-four-hour news is dubious, but that has not slowed the competitive fever. In November, Murdoch reproached CNN for its "liberal" bias; Turner responded by threatening to "squish Rupert like a bug." In December, when ABC announced its own twenty-four-hour effort, Arledge said, with a swagger, "He's got a much bigger bug to squish now." There is already a frenzy to hire news talent—and to hold on to recognizable personalities. Turner boasts of wanting to lure Brokaw away from NBC, and network news officials can recite the names of free agents whose contracts will expire or can be reopened in the next year or so: at NBC, Brokaw and Bryant Gumbel; at ABC, Peter Jennings, Ted Koppel, Diane Sawyer, and Barbara Walters (Arledge says he has already reached an agreement to renew Walters' contract); at CBS, Ed Bradley; and, at CNN, Christiane Amanpour, among others.

Of the four networks planning to assault CNN so far, only NBC has a ready cable outlet—America's Talking, the little watched counterpart to its successful business channel, CNBC. And only NBC has an on-line partner. "That's a wonderful partnership," the Capital Cities/ABC president, Robert Iger, says. NBC is expected to be the first network to inaugurate a twenty-four-hour cable channel, starting in mid-July; and, although each network guards its sketchy plans as if they were military secrets, NBC, like the others, plans a heavy component of local news. "We will provide local affiliates time to break out" and insert their own news, Wright says.

Over the next five years, Microsoft will invest four hundred and twenty million dollars in the cable news partnership, which will include an on-line service permitting viewers with home computers to summon data, pictures, and information from video or print libraries; over the same period, NBC will provide an additional two hundred million. Tom Rogers, NBC's president for cable and new-business development, sees an entirely new landscape. "We're moving to a world where there are no time constraints," he says. "How do you get there? The only way is to tie in to the existing television world."

ABC has now moved up its starting date to late 1996, pushed by its new parent, the Walt Disney Company. "Disney is a lot more amenable and interested in this than the previous management might have been," Arledge says, and he goes on, "You can't just be intimidated because someone"—like Ted Turner—"has a jump start on you. Remember, there was a diet drink called No-Cal. Then Coca-Cola got in the act. It's very rare that someone has an idea and owns it in perpetuity."

But, while ABC is ranked first among the networks in news ratings, its vulnerabilities—especially the absence of a cable channel—are likely to persist. Cap Cities/ABC owns such premier cable programming properties as ESPN, but it is not yet obvious how this may work to the network's advantage. "They already gave away leverage because ESPN signed six- and seven-year contracts," says the C.E.O. of one of the nation's largest cable systems. In addition, twenty per cent of ESPN

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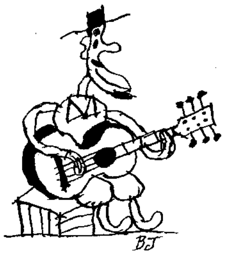
CBS, which used to be the leader in network news, initially resisted the new trend. Three years ago, when its news division proposed a twenty-four-hour cable effort, management vetoed the venture. Now that Westinghouse has acquired CBS, however, the message has changed. Indeed, Peter Lund told me that the network might "go out and buy an existing cable program network." CBS, according to two well-placed sources there, has been exploring the possibility of acquiring Gaylord Entertainment, which owns a country-oriented cable network that CBS would like to transform, at least partly, into a news channel.

CBS officials concede that they would collaborate with Fox, despite Murdoch's belief that CBS's "objective" news often hides a "liberal" bias. CBS would bring with it a news division, and Fox would bring some relationships with distributors. Murdoch is a business ally in several ventures with John Malone, the nation's largest cable operator. The problem, an important Malone associate says, is that, even if Malone wanted to assist his friend, "there is no channel capacity to launch him in a big way." Murdoch also has access to News Corporation satellite-distribution platforms throughout the world, but to succeed with around-the-clock news Fox would need to build a news infrastructure. Only fifty-eight of Fox's hundred and sixty-three affiliated stations have a local newscast, and the network's own news operation has approximately eighty employees. "I spent three million seven hundred thousand dollars in Bosnia in December alone," CNN's president, Tom Johnson, says. "You've got to be prepared to invest."

In January, Murdoch announced that he had hired CNBC president and fellow-conservative Roger Ailes to be chairman of Fox News and to launch a twenty-four-hour cable news channel. Because the News Corporation, with its dozens of newspapers and worldwide television services, employs more journalists and has more correspondents in more world capitals than almost any other news organization, Murdoch announced that he was confident of a quick start. Fox would begin its cable news broadcasting "before the end of this year," he promised, and would "be taking it around the world immediately." Ailes was a bit more subdued when I spoke with him on the phone a few days later. "Rupert and I agreed not to say anything until we have something to say," Ailes said, pleading for time. Meanwhile, the Fox-CBS task force has stalled, with each partner insisting that it wants to manage the enterprise; Andrew Heyward, the CBS News president, who inherited the task force when he assumed the job, in January, says, "If there was a feeling that Murdoch had a political agenda, which he's denied, that would be a problem to some people." Officials at both Fox and CBS maintain that the possibility of alliance remains alive, if barely. "It's not dead," a Fox executive says. "Nothing's ever dead with Rupert."

CNN, meanwhile, enjoys some advantages in this contest. With nine domestic bureaus and twenty-one overseas, plus a budget of about five hundred million dollars and, it claims, six hundred domestic and overseas affiliates to provide news pictures, CNN has a sturdy infrastructure. The link between Turner Broadcasting System and Time Warner, if the merger is approved, should add considerably to its strength. In addition, CNN already has its own on-line effort, and enjoys a reputation for fairness. CNN's more generic news, however, has built-in vulnerabilities. With some exceptions, CNN lacks a stable of well-known on-air personalities. Coupled with a dearth of skilled producers, this becomes a glaring weakness, as Tom Johnson acknowledges. "We know that personality pulls audiences," he says. "That is clearly an area of vulnerability. The networks are also much stronger with producing talent. We will need to spend more on production."



WHAT is not at all clear is whether additional twenty-four-hour news channels and news on demand makes business sense—or even whether twenty-four-hour news represents the future or a last gasp from the past. Brokaw, though he applauds the moves made by NBC, is wary of the implications for the best traditions of network news: "My concern is that the all-news channel will become an excuse not to do things at the networks in news. Instead, we'll move very hard into entertainment and infotainment, more and more magazines and less and less attention to hard news. Our friends in the entertainment division on the West Coast are always looking for any excuse to protect their 8-to-11-P.M. turf. I understand that."

Since no one projects that the news audience will multiply, few news executives are confident about profits. "I don't believe there is a market for five news channels," CNN's Johnson says, expressing a widely shared sentiment. CBS's Lund says, "I don't know what success is in this field. Is success the ability to lose a hundred million dollars before the next guy?" The most optimistic argument is advanced by NBC's Andrew Lack: "Ten years ago, people told me the audience for TV magazine shows was dead, yet they've grown. It's ludicrous to me to say there is no room for another news channel. Maybe there's room for three or four."

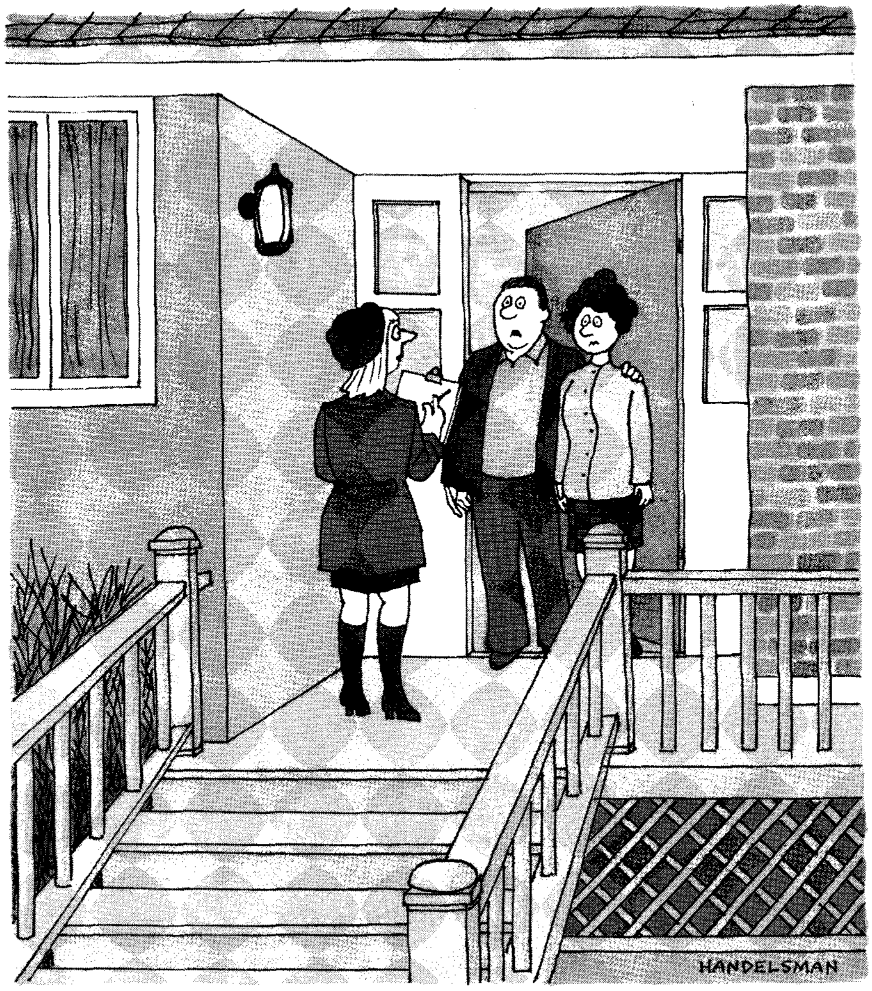
Surveys, however, suggest that viewers want more educational, cultural, and children's-channel choices. And then there is the distribution problem. "The capacity is the big restraint," NBC's Tom Rogers says. "To add something, you've almost got to drop something. The bottleneck will be broken by the digital set-top box"—allowing cable companies to squeeze more channels over their wire—"but that won't be available in mass distribution for three years."

Other factors spur the haste to get into cable news. One is a preoccupation with what is called "branding," the belief that a familiar name flashes like a neon light on a shelf stacked with merchandise—or from among five hundred channels. "A twenty-four-hour cable news business," says Cap Cities/ABC's Iger, "is not necessarily a good business unto itself. But it is a necessary business for the over-all support and extension of the ABC news brand." Another consideration is "bundling"—a word invoked by corporate leaders almost as often as "synergy." A popular brand name, it is believed, must provide many services—entertainment, sports, and news among them. The networks, by having a cable (and computer outlet) for their news product, also see a way to better utilize their resources—such as the footage from NBC's fifteen cameras at the Million Man March—and amortize their expenses. "The largest growth potential for network news is outside the network," Peter Lund, of CBS, says, and he goes on to mention cable channels and the Internet, CD-ROMs and electronic publishing. No one yet knows whether the Internet will be a big money-maker for news, or whether the source of its money will be advertising or subscriptions. But few dare miss the flight to the moon.

The timing for this new interest is also propitious. With the government scrutinizing the proposed merger of Time Warner and Turner Broadcasting, including the minority stake of nearly ten per cent held by John Malone's Tele-Communications, Inc., worrisome antitrust questions are being aired. Time Warner and T.C.I. between them would have forty per cent of all cable customers in America. And just recently, on February 27th, U S West, a Baby Bell, announced that it was buying Continental Cablevision, the nation's third-largest cable company. Since U S West already owns twenty-five per cent of Time Warner Entertainment, the top three cable companies, which serve nearly two-thirds of all cable customers in America, would have overlapping interests. With the government watching, would they dare deny a cable channel to a CNN competitor?

A senior executive at Cap Cities/ABC asserts, "If you're trying to understand it as a business, don't. The thing that pushed it over the edge was that both NBC and Fox will do it, and probably CBS. It was a way to protect our franchise. It's also a way of keeping our talent." The former CBS News president Eric Ober says of the networks, "There's almost a belief that you're not a competitive news organization if you don't have foreign bureaus and you don't have morning news and you don't have evening news. And if viewers don't perceive you as a competitive news organization, you're not going to be their choice in a news crisis." Peter Lund suggests that decisions are often made for reasons of perception. There is a belief, he says, "out there in constituency land—on Wall Street, among our affiliates, among our employees—that, given the announcements of the other news divisions, if we don't have a cable news presence, then that must mean that we are not in for the long haul or we won't grow."

In the short run, at least, the new paradigm is the same as the old. Three years ago, corporate chiefs like Viacom's Sumner Redstone were testifying before Congress that the cable operators were guilty of monopolistic practices and were denying distribution to Showtime and other Viacom programming. Then, when Viacom acquired Paramount, in 1994, Redstone—like Michael Eisner, at Disney—maintained that strong content would guarantee its own distribution. Now competitors are concerned about the overseas-distribution platforms that Murdoch has erected with direct-broadcast satellites; in America, the networks realize that if they want twenty-four-hour news they must pass through the cable tollgate, and maybe also through the higher-speed cable modem wire.

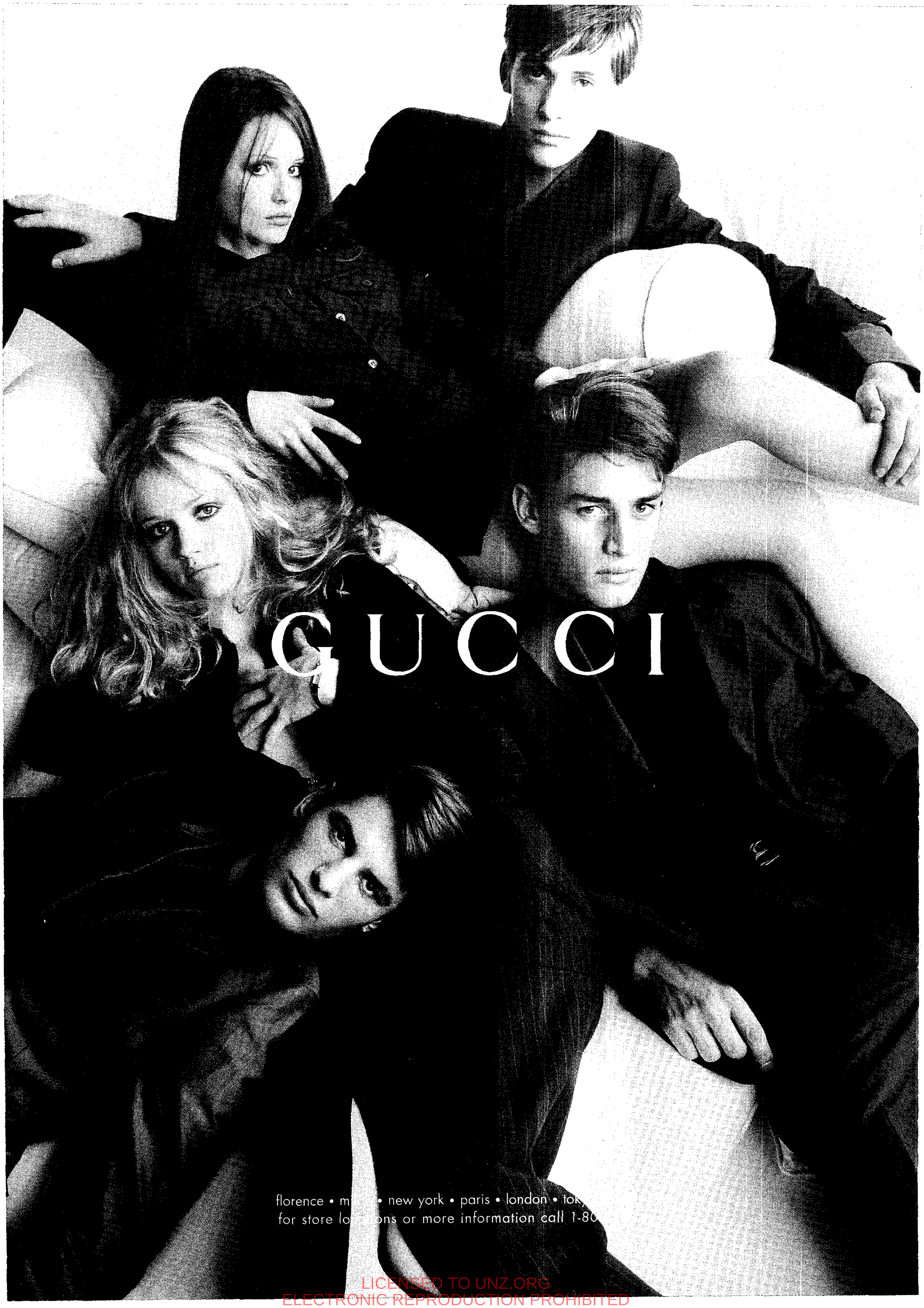


"We'll probably vote for the least qualified candidate. We have no judgment skills."

• •

Perhaps, however, a news channel is a technology of the past. "It's ironic that they're starting all these news channels at a time when the technology of news channels is facing extinction," observes Tracy Westen, the president of the nonprofit Center for Governmental Studies, in Los Angeles, and the founder of the Democracy Network, an interactive, digitalized service for interested voters. The real future, Westen says, is "news on demand." The problem is that the technology is not yet there and won't be for several years. Until it is, one can only guess whether news on demand is a real or a fake business.

In the end, the twenty-four-hour cable and news-on-demand race is a contest among businesses, not charitable institutions. NBC's president, Bob Wright, on being asked if he would pull the plug after five years if NBC made no money, answered, "Sure." With his back to the television monitors in his Rockefeller Plaza office, Wright explained, "This is no fun exercise for Fox or for ABC—or for us, for that matter. News is a place for people who have an appetite for losses." His Microsoft partner, Peter Neupert, had a somewhat different answer: "Microsoft is well known for its long-term perspective. We expect it to take a long time to make both cable and on line profitable. I think we'll go much further than five years." They may have to. ♦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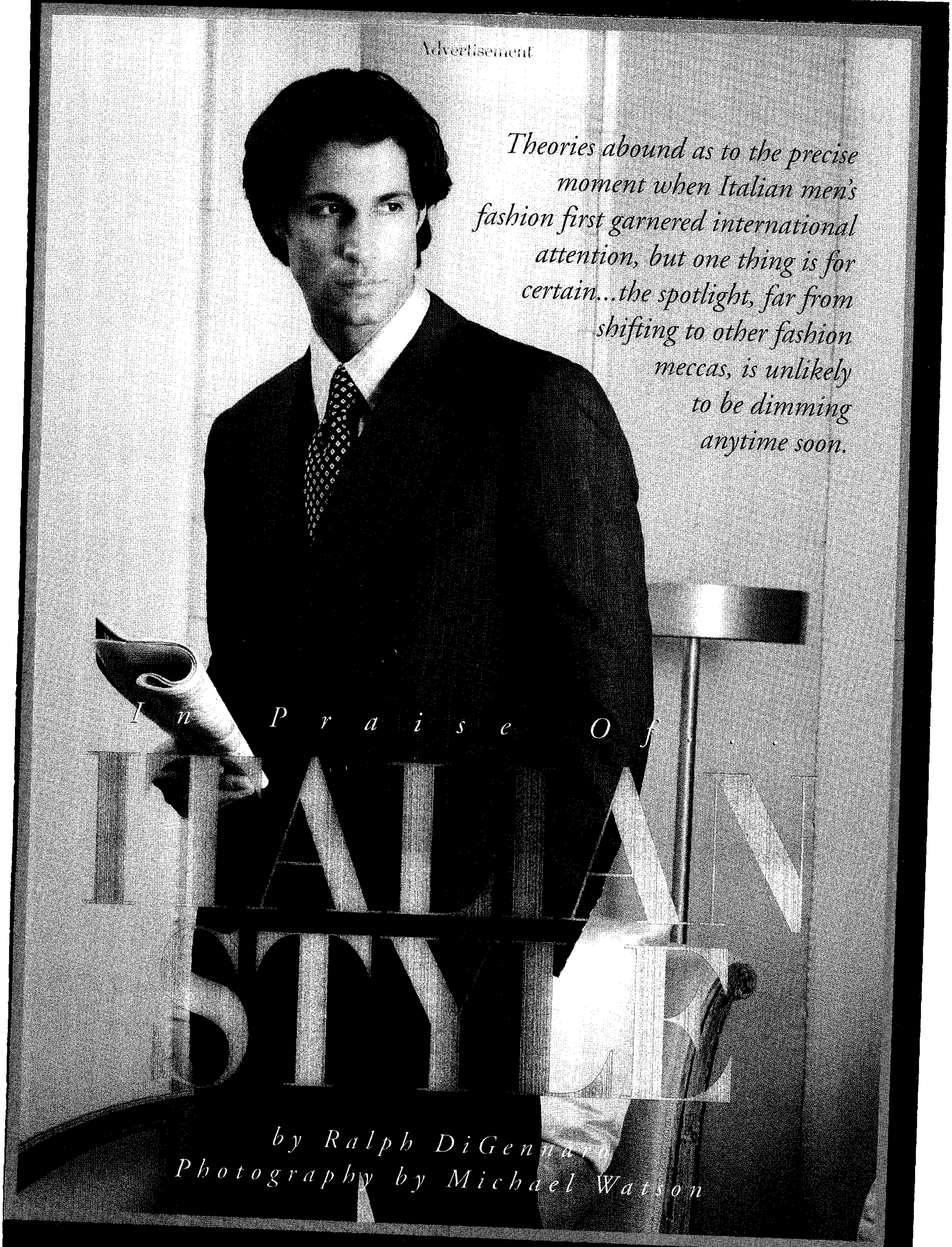


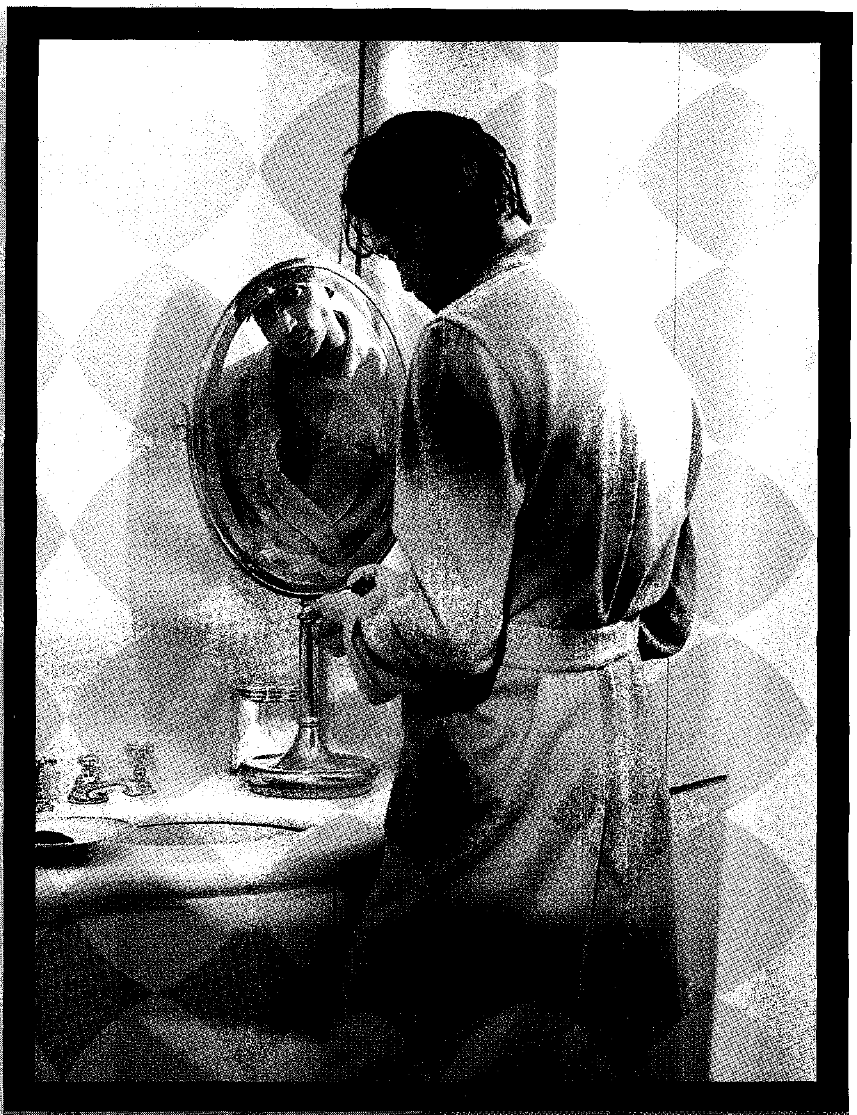
Theories abound as to the precise moment when Italian men's fashion first garnered international attention, but one thing is for certain...the spotlight, far from shifting to other fashion meccas, is unlikely to be dimming anytime soon.

In Praise Of . . .

ITALIAN STYLE

by Ralph DiGennaro

Photography by Michael Watson



The luxury of Italian fabrics as interpreted by Loro Piana, above, in this shawl-collared pearl gray pure cashmere robe. On the cover: Pure, superfine wool six-button double-breasted suit from Kiton, offered exclusively at Bergdorf Goodman.

To the multitude of casual observers, Italian fashion, specifically Italian men's fashion, introduced itself to America and the world on the unlikely back of a young actor named Richard Gere in the 1980 film *American Gigolo*. While the movie itself was less than memorable, the clothes worn by the title character (Gere) rattled and challenged fashion sensibilities and altered, perhaps forever, the way men would view and wear tailored clothing.

The man responsible for Gere's wardrobe was a barely-known designer from Piacenza named Giorgio Armani. Obsessed as he was with Hollywood male stars of the Forties, the Italian designer set out to resurrect their effortless style by ripping the insides out of tailored clothing, doing away with excess padding and stitches and exaggerating the shoulders somewhat. He designed his decidedly masculine suits using lightweight, novelty-weave wools and linens guaranteed to drape, break and wrinkle. The look was one of sexy, studied nonchalance, a style and an attitude that fearlessly flew in the stiff face of conventional clothing. Armani single-handedly sought to re-define men's fashion and in the process he stumbled across a revelation: Clothing and comfort need not be mutually exclusive terms.

Of course, those who study fashion know that Italian ready-to-wear was put on the world's stage more than two decades before under the pioneering leadership of Giovanni Battista Giorgini, a dapper man often recognized as the true "father of Italian fashion." An impresario in every sense of the word, Giorgini intuitively understood that Paris couture was becoming increasingly meaningless to the West, whose own designers were now developing ready-to-wear businesses. Beating the French designers to the punch, in February of 1951 Giorgini organized the first collective showing of Italian ready-to-wear and fabrics in Florence, offering the work of Rome houses such as Antonelli, Fontana and Simonetta Visconti, among others, along with Milan designers Marucelli, Vanna and Veneziani.

The inaugural event, followed by others each and every season, was a huge success, at once establishing a new image of Italian fashion in the world arena and helping to spawn what today is Italy's single largest and most prestigious industry.

The next season, after much prompting from Brioni co-founder Gaetano Savini, Giorgini saw the wisdom in having the first men's collection presented on the catwalk of the Sala Bianca in Florence, and invited Brioni to create a special runway collection to be shown during the women's presentations.

According to author Cristina Giorgetti, writing in her book *Brioni: Fifty Years of Style*, Brioni's tailor business took off in America

"Armani's look was one of sexy nonchalance, a style that fearlessly flew in the stiff face of conventional clothing."

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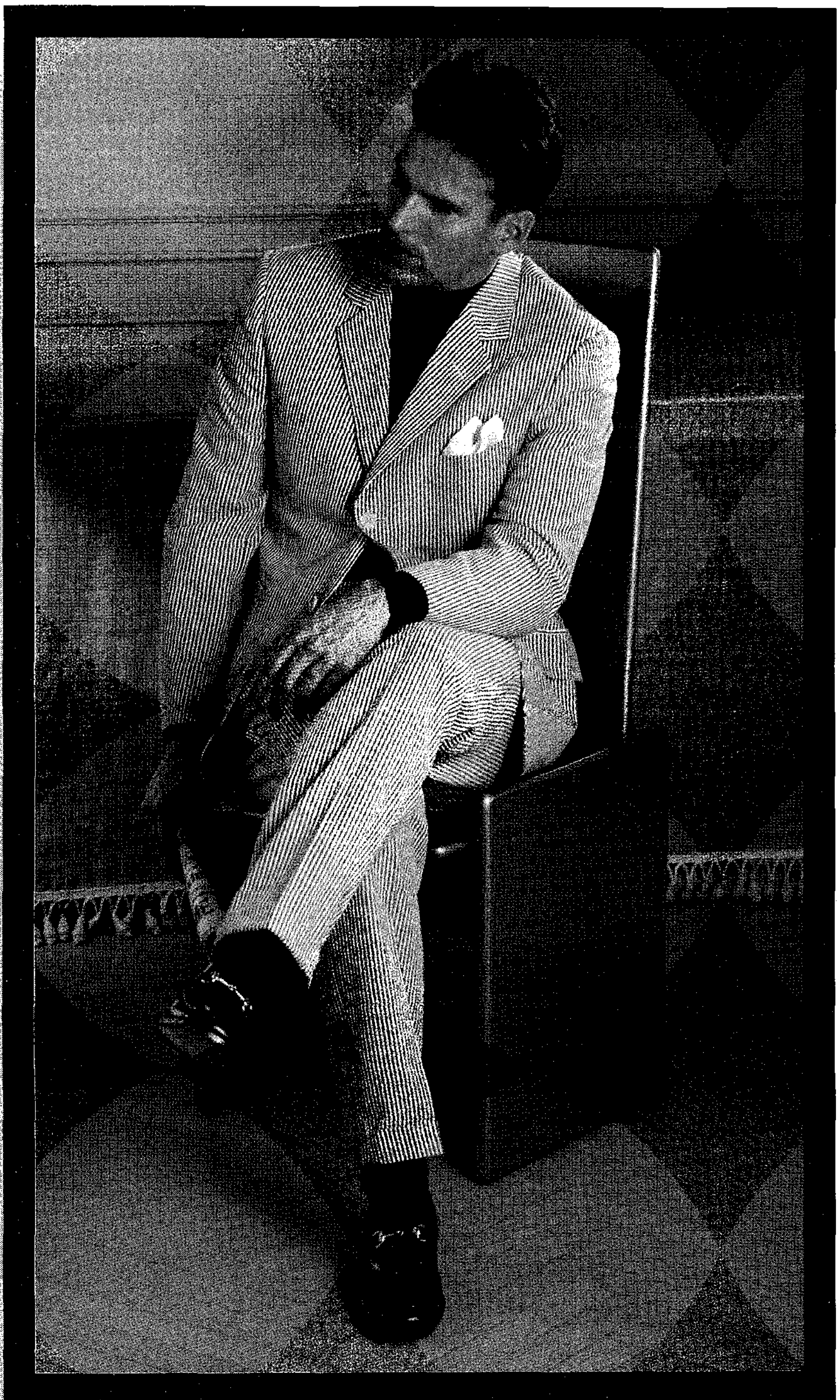

The ease and nonchalance of Italian tailoring updated for the Nineties. Pure cotton seersucker three-button suit rolled to the top button by Gucci. Leather slip-ons with brass horse-bit detailing, a casual shoe classic by Gucci.

following his ground-breaking show in Florence. He opened up an entirely new market to the Italian textile industry, and this pattern was subsequently followed by many other Italian design tailoring houses, particularly in the Eighties. Yet as far as the Sala Bianca shows went to open up Italian ready-to-wear to the American market, the underlying message from the runways spoke less about fashion than about quality.

At the time, craftsmen such as Amedeo Testoni had for decades established a solid reputation in Bologna for handcrafted shoes. Here was an artisan community dating back to the 13th century that was, in the Fifties, just beginning to reach out to other parts of the world. Thanks to Amedeo's daughter, Marisa, Testoni began adding other products such as bags, belts and luggage.

Likewise in Milan, Tanino Crisci had established his custom shoe business at the turn of the century, yet few outside of Italy up to the Fifties knew of this gem of a shoe crafter. Today, Tanino Crisci shoes are handmade much the way they were over the last 100 years, with leather used inside and out for comfort and durability.

During the period following the end of World War II, Paris quickly regained its former reign over the fashion universe, aided in no small part by Christian Dior's revolutionary "New Look," which had awakened a new sensibility about shape and fit, giving women a much sought-after new silhouette to consider, which they did in droves. Italy, on the other hand, was fast building an equally impressive reputation in textile design, especially with knits, turning out new ideas in textures, colors, and blends. In fact, so advanced did many of these Italian mills become that the celebrated Parisian designers began to look beyond their borders for new ideas in textiles.

Italian fashion, in reality, was born with fabric. And much of this fabric was created just after the turn of the century in the hilly mountainside villages that dotted the northern Italian

"Italian fashion was born with fabric...created in hilly mountaintop villages that dotted the northern Italian landscape."

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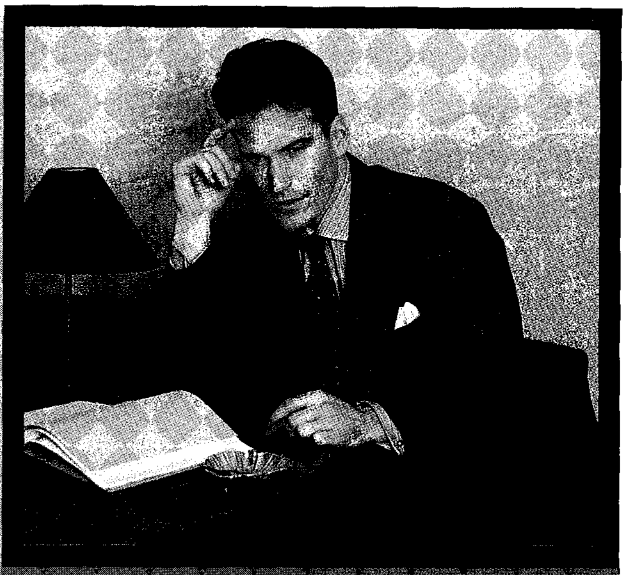

All the sophistication and impeccable tailoring that defines Italian style, in Louis' own cashmere multistripe double-breasted peaked-lapel suit. Shirt and tie by Lorenzini.

landscape, where family-run textile companies established their mills and employed the local populace. Firms with family surnames such as Zegna and Loro Piana shared a common vision: They could ultimately produce more fashionable, higher quality, natural-fiber fabrics than those in England or Scotland. Zegna and Loro Piana, two of the best and most successful, who did more than any other to put Italian fashion in play, share many commonalities: Both were founded by ambitious patriarchs with the vision to see beyond the Italian peninsula; both turn out the world's most elegant and creative fabrics; both possess an almost obsessive desire for quality; both are now run by second, third and even fourth generations; both have made major inroads in selling to world markets and helping to establish international prestige for Italian fabrics.

Ermenegildo Zegna was barely 20 years old when he took over his father's small family business in 1910 in Treviso, Italy, determined to produce fabrics for men's tailored clothing of a quality the world had never seen. Today, Ermenegildo Zegna is viewed as one of the most important names in fine ready-made men's tailored clothing, furnishings and sportswear, introduced by the company in 1968. The Zegna name is also universally associated with two remarkable fabrics, "High Performance" and "Tindari" wools—the former a super lightweight cloth made of extra fine, high-twist Australian merino wool yarns and the latter made from superfine Australian wool. Both fabrics are virtually "seasonless" and perfect for traveling.

Completely "vertical" in its manufacturing, Zegna has also done much to popularize Italian fashion around the world through its elegant shops, the first one opening in 1980 in Paris followed by Milan, London, Madrid, Berlin, New York, Tokyo and Beijing. With its 73 boutiques worldwide and 91 shops in department and specialty stores, the Zegna name is uniquely pervasive in world markets today and continues to increase its classic yet sophisticated brand of Italian style.

A sixth generation business today, Loro Piana stands as the largest weaver of luxurious cashmere, the largest producer of superfine worsteds and the largest buyer of Australian superfine wool. Loro Piana has built its modern reputation on "Tasmanian," a fabric that combines elegance with performance. Made of the finest raw materials, it is woven as a superfine wool—cool in the summer, warm in the winter, yet heavily constructed to offer remarkable wrinkle-resistant properties.

The special worsted and cashmere fabrics from Loro Piana are so highly regarded by fine clothiers and custom tailors around the world that they often will embroider the fabric maker's logo inside the jacket chest. In 1988 the company bought an old fabric mill in northern Connecticut and refurbished the premises with Italian machinery and processing equipment utilizing state-of-the-art technology. Loro Piana is now able to offer the same high quality fabrics at highly competitive prices—Italian quality made in America.

Three years ago the firm opened its first shop

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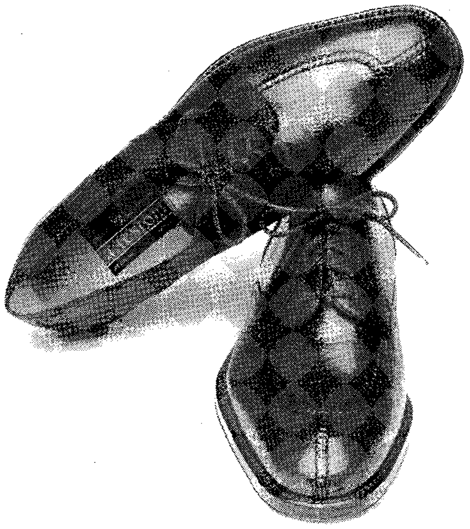

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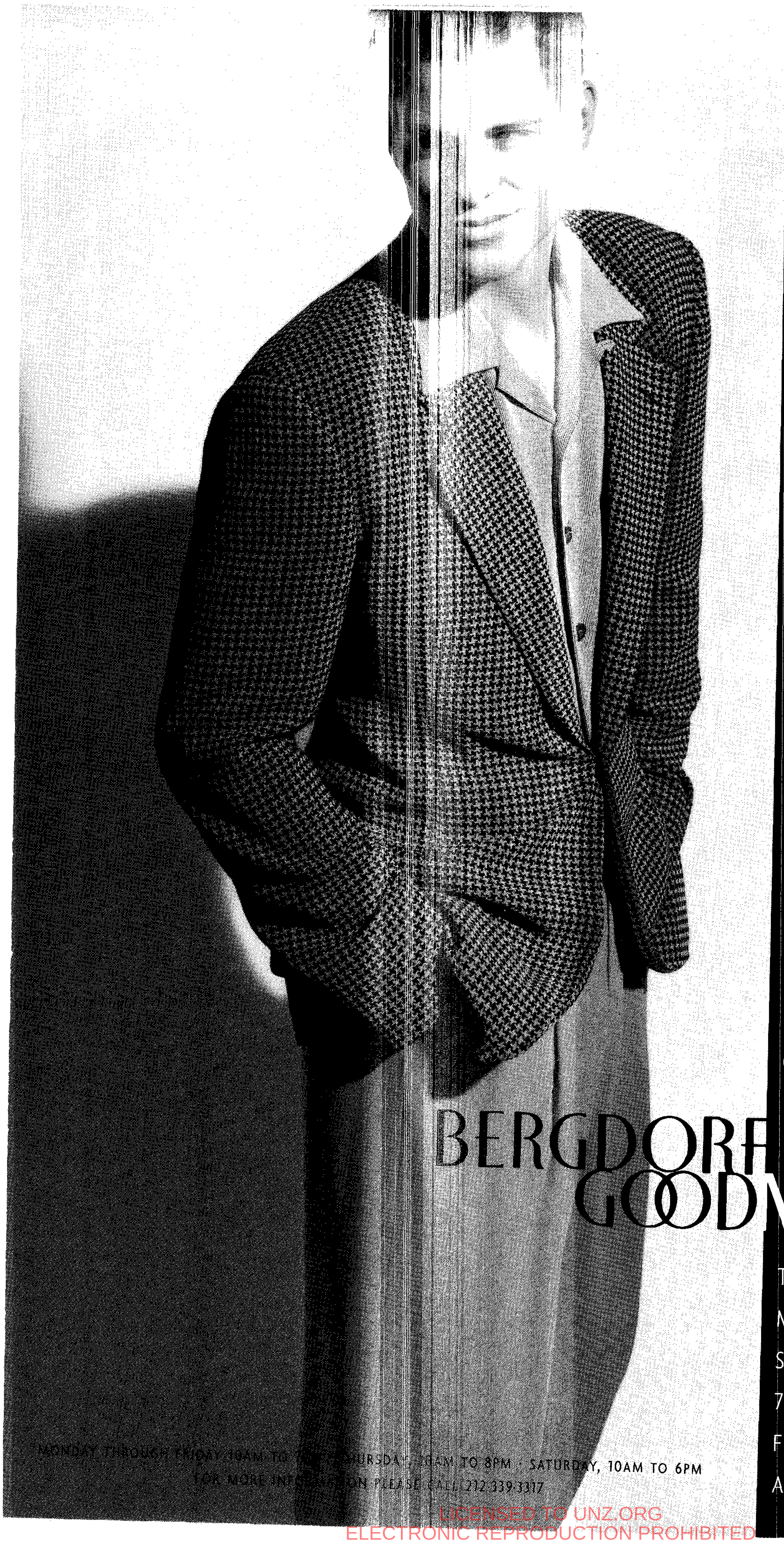

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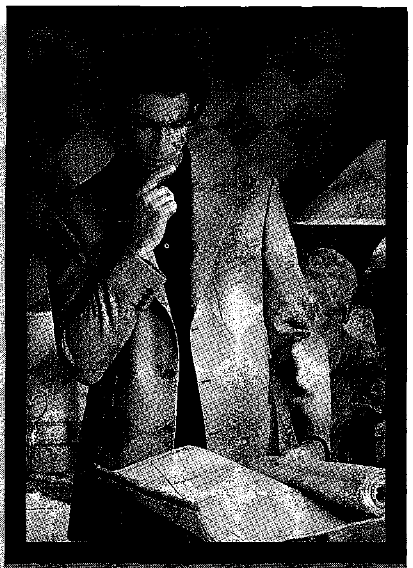
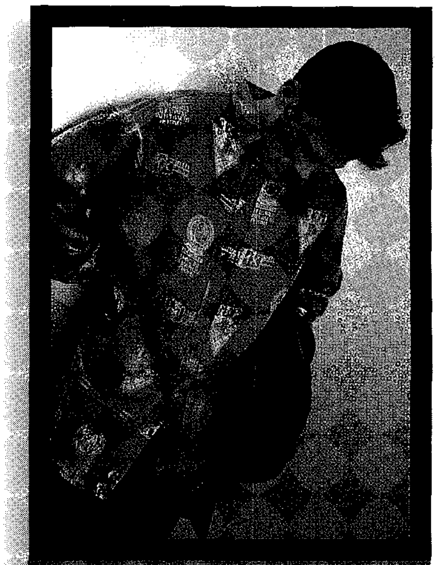


The unmistakable cut and style of Brioni, above, in pure wool.

on New York's swank Upper East Side where Loro Piana buffs can find a world of luxurious men's and women's clothing made-to-order in Italy, along with ready-made outerwear, cashmere slippers and robes, accessories, knitwear, and custom shirts, hand sewn in Naples.

Naples is also home to the special Neapolitan tailoring style and philosophy of Kiton, a style of dressing that could only be found in Italy. Here the tailoring creed hangs on a soft, less-is-more school of craftsmanship. The wisdom here is that a garment more loosely sewn is better able to "mold" to the body for comfort without sacrificing structure or shape. In addition, Kiton uses only the lightest weight, natural canvases, and the shoulders are constructed with a minimum of padding so that a discernible crimping is recognizable at the sleeve head.

The virtues of Neapolitan tailoring over the years, with all its softness and ease, has not been lost on Bergdorf Goodman, a store whose very retailing tradition is steeped in Italian style. Indeed, Bergdorf Goodman's love affair dates back to the store's beginnings with founder Andrew Goodman who often mused that he looked forward to fashion growing increasingly international with more countries contributing their culture and influences.



The big shirt interpreted in a print on pure silk by Gianfranco Ferre.

Goodman's musings were as prophetic as they were wishful, as Bergdorf's was often forced in its early days to look to cities other than Paris for fashion simply because many French houses would not sell to the fledgling store on upper Fifth Avenue.

Bergdorf's found Italy to be the perfect alternative and the store's buyers were regulars at the Sala Bianca in Florence. Throughout the years, Bergdorf Goodman has often been credited with championing many of the Italian companies that have since become modern household fashion names. Today, Bergdorf's continues to evolve its Italian fashion business, rebuilding boutiques of late for the likes of Giorgio Armani and Luciano Barbera and comprehensively stocking top of the line Italian clothing lines such as Brioni, Kiton, Etro and newcomers Antonio Fusco and Baldessarini.

Another great retailer who promoted Italian fashion in America in the early years is Boston-based Louis. Long considered a fashion retailing maverick, Louis owner Murray Pearlstein spent the early Seventies combing through the best Italian textiles mills hoping to unearth special fabrics rarely seen in America. Pearlstein then brought the swatches to the American clothing makers and, in time, successfully convinced them to make suits using those remarkable fabrics.

Today, Louis of Boston is as aggressive as ever with Italian fashion, particularly with tailored clothing. This clothier prides itself in

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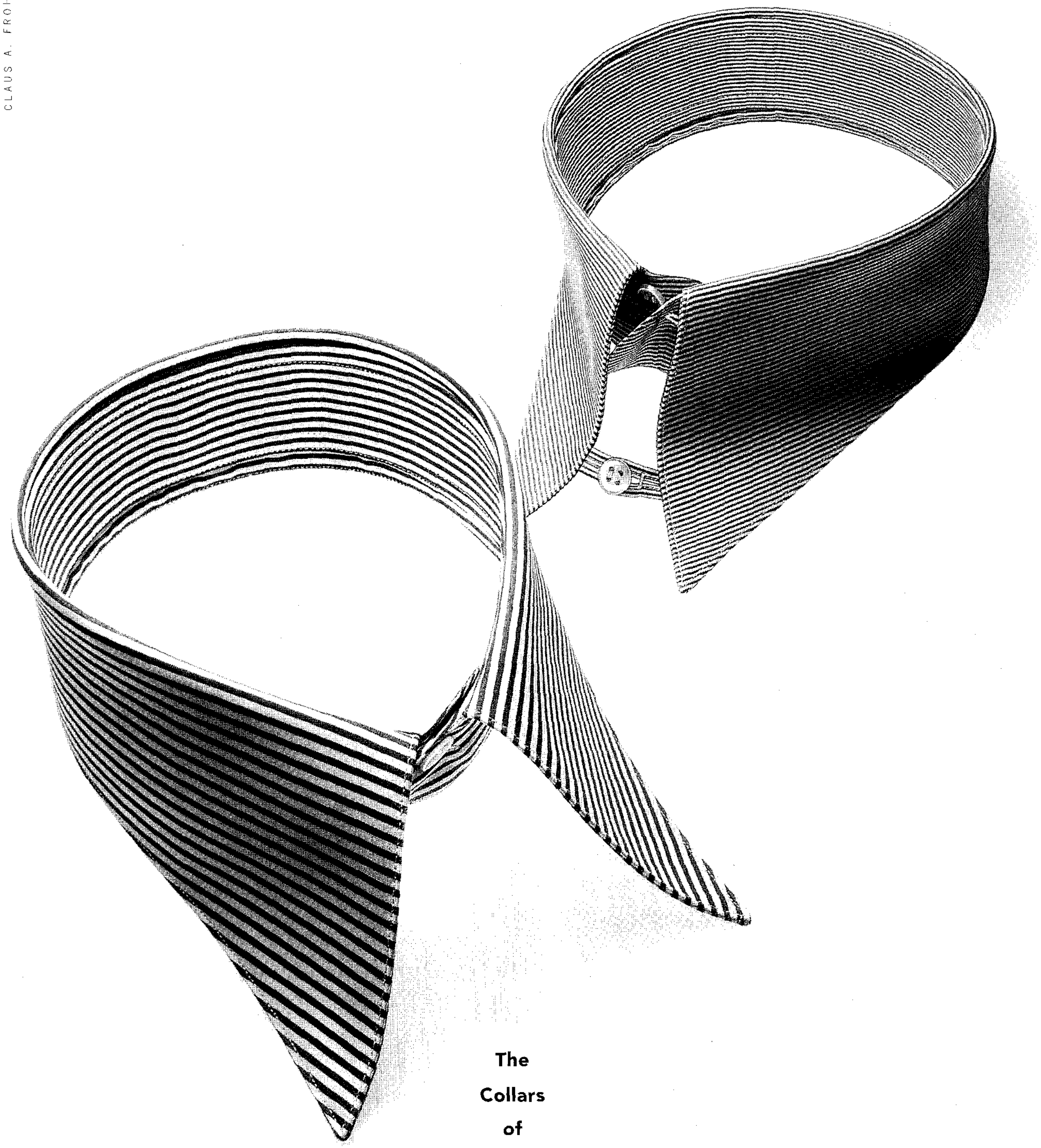

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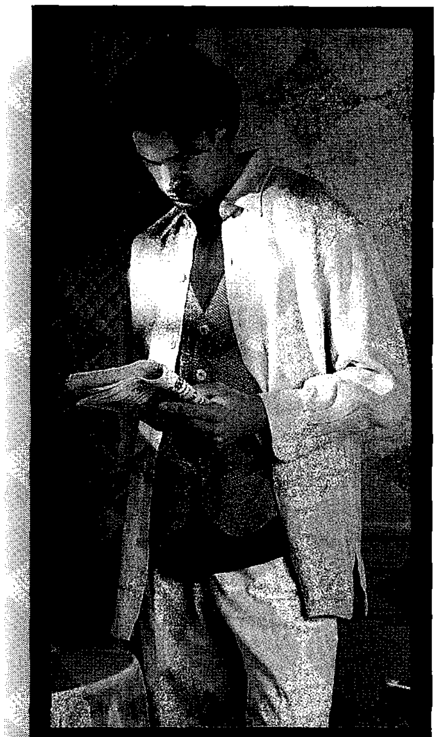
stocking such finely-made suits as Brioni and Luciano Barbera, which sell for $2,500 and up, and flawlessly crafted, hand-sewn shirts by Lorenzini, a Louis discovery.

As the Seventies reached midpoint, Milan began to eclipse Florence and Rome as Italy's fashion capital, as new designers established ready-to-wear ateliers in the side streets surrounding the Via Montenapoleone. While Rome still had its standard-bearers in Brioni, Caraceni, Piatelli and Valentino, the Eighties began with young designers such as Armani, Versace, Ferre, Soprani, Venturi, Missoni and Coveri, who began turning out collections that could best be described as a fusion of tailored clothing and sportswear. The clothes were young, casual, sophisticated, full of new ideas and remarkably well made. By mid-decade Giorgio Armani pulled ahead of the pack and his uncluttered, minimalist designing came to be recognized as the signature that was Milanese fashion, particularly with regard to men's wear.



Italian sportswear at its softest,
in pure cotton and linen, by Zegna.

While other designers in Milan (and in America to be sure), followed his lead to some degree, the end of the decade witnessed a shaking out of sorts as two designers, Franco Moschino and Romeo Gigli, turned out collections that pointed Milanese fashion in new directions. Moschino's genius was his ability to lampoon fashion in general with wit and style, striking a responsive chord, if not a funny bone, in the universal fashion psyche. Gigli, not unlike the Japanese designers who were his muses, brought a deconstructed wistfulness to his women's collections and reduced men's wear to its barest bones, all the while remaining relevant and thought-provoking with his silhouettes, fabrics, and colors.

In many ways Gigli paved the way for two of the hottest names in Italian accessories companies to carve their own ready-to-wear niche right out of Milan's traditional fashion establishment: Gucci and Prada. Under the design leadership of American Tom Ford, Gucci is truly enjoying a Renaissance of sorts as Ford's tongue-in-cheek collections for men and women have veered far off the company's long established equestrian course.

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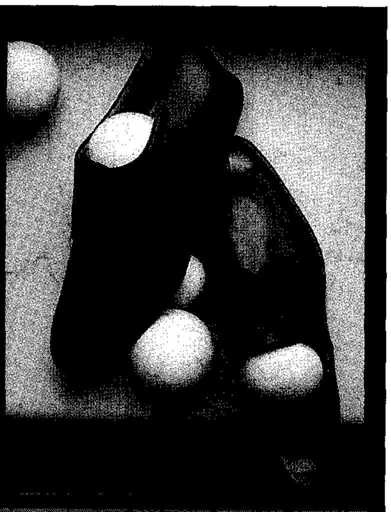
The elegant monkstrap dress shoe by Tanino Crisci.

In the last two seasons, the Gucci look has evoked an offbeat mod sensibility while maintaining a modern Nineties edge. Gucci has proven beyond a doubt that old Italian fashion houses never die but instead are reborn in new and wondrous ways.

As for the future of Milan and its designers, it is clear that the talent in this otherwise bleak and nondescript city have matured and no longer need to be identified as a group to survive. Gianni Versace is rocking and rolling his way into the next millennium. So vast and versatile is Gianfranco Ferre's talent that he has been tapped by the House of Dior to design their couture collections. Ten years ago such an association was far removed from the realm of possibility. An Italian in Paris? Like ketchup on pommes frites.

If time has proven anything since the days of the Sala Bianca in Florence more than 25 years ago, it is that Italian style is more than just a state of mind. It is a force that wields beauty and power...a force to be reckoned with that won't soon be quieted on any fashion front.



The split-toe blucher tie front shoe is an A. Testoni classic.

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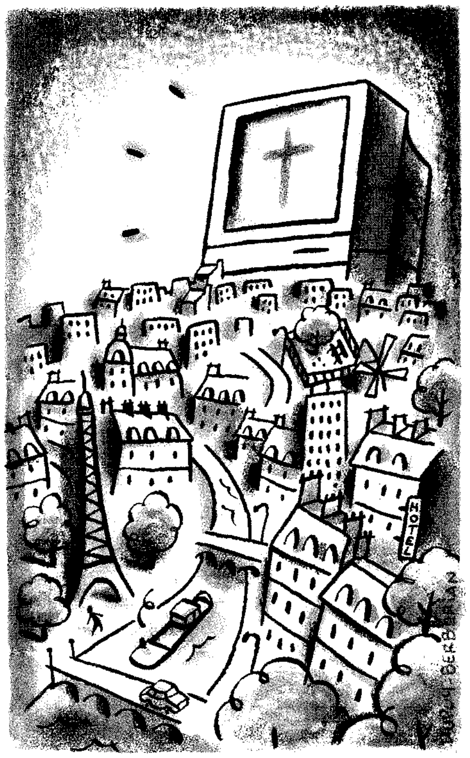
PARIS JOURNAL

THE VIRTUAL BISHOP

What does it take to get the French to turn on their computers?

BY ADAM GOPNIK

FRANCE went on line this winter. Though the country has as many computers as the next Western European power, and even its own, white-elephant directory service, the Minitel, until recently the Internet was seen here as the kind of nerdy setup that only an American could get worked up about. France being France, the date of its slightly belated discovery of the Internet was declared by one observer to be "the key date in the birth of virtual civilization," and, France being France, what it took to get people interested in being on line was a realization that the Internet might be a new instrument on which to sound the national note of querulous metaphysics. Within a few days, the Pope had been defied, the government shaken, and a dead President's prostate clandestinely examined in a cyber-crêperie (a place where you can rent a computer and eat a crêpe), and all because people plugged their computers into telephone lines and turned them on.



France's cyber revolt began, in a way, with a group of homeless on the chic Left Bank.

DUPUY-BERBERIAN

First came the invention of the virtual diocese. Although in America there is an impression that the virtual diocese is one more bit of on-line do-gooding, in the American mode, like that "Earth First!" bulletin board the guy in the next office belongs to, in fact it is the site of what one of its creators calls "a metaphysical 'Star Wars' " between, on the one side, the French tradition of abstract speculation and, on the other, the Roman Catholic hierarchy.

It began modestly, with some squatters on the Rue du Dragon. The Rue du Dragon is a little street in the center of chic Left Bank Paris, right around the corner from the Brasserie Lipp and from the Saint-Germain drugstore (which is in the process of being turned into a giant Armani boutique), and a couple of years ago some "excluded" families started living in an empty building on this street. By "excluded" the French mean something larger and more poignant than we mean by "homeless," since their word implies people who have been not merely left without shelter but excluded from being French. "The existence of homeless families on the Rue du Dragon was unbelievably shocking," a Parisian explained to a runaway New Yorker not long ago. "It meant that ordinary middle-class Parisians on their way to their apartments were forced to confront the reality of poverty and homelessness." The New Yorker nodded patiently, waiting to hear the shocking part.

In time, a number of clergymen began to take an interest in the families on the Rue du Dragon, and the most important of those clergymen was Jacques Gaillot, the Roman Catholic Bishop of the French Diocese of Évreux, in Normandy. Bishop Gaillot is an extraordinarily low-key and gentle man whose parishioners find it hard to picture in a mitre. He often dresses in mufti—black turtleneck and suit—with a

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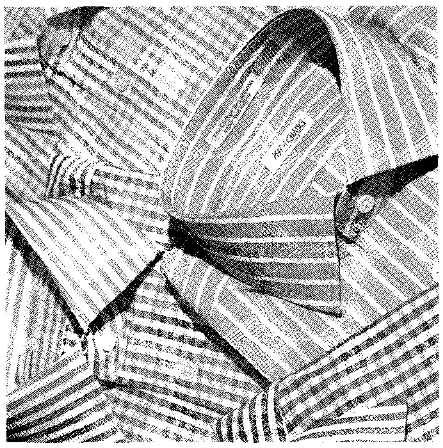

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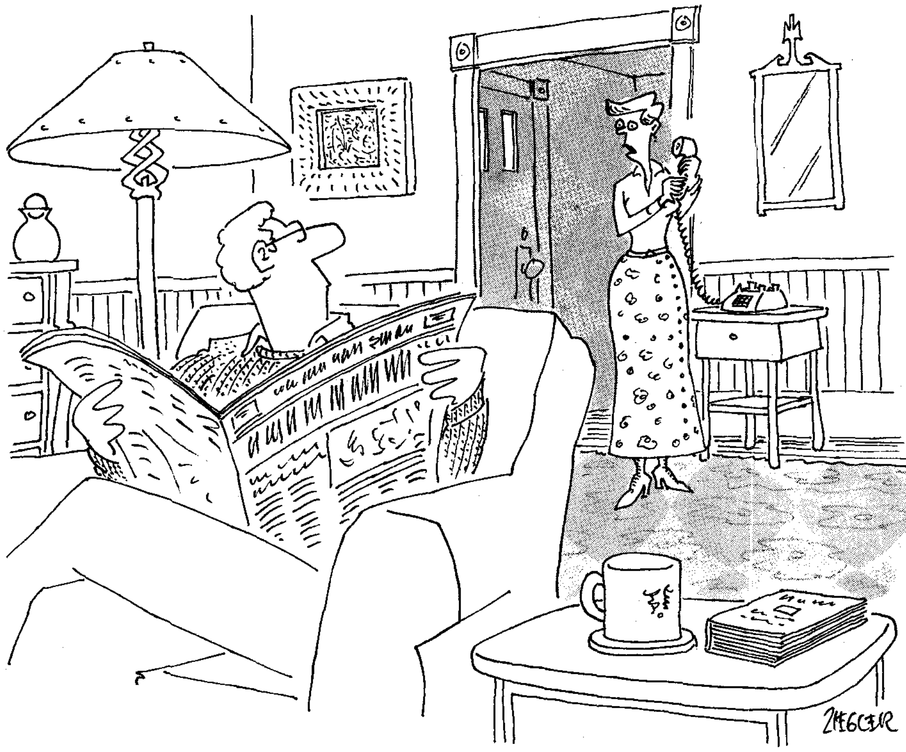


"It's O. J. Simpson. He wants to know if we can spare a couple of minutes of our time."

• •

small silver cross in his lapel the only sign of his vocation. Gaillot actually went to live with the squatters and came to feel that "the exclusion of the excluded included their exclusion from the media," as he put it. He tried to redress this form of exclusion by talking about their troubles on television. In the course of his television appearances, he also offered his views on other questions—priestly marriage, the "social gospel"—on which he has what his admirers like to call "heterodox" opinions.

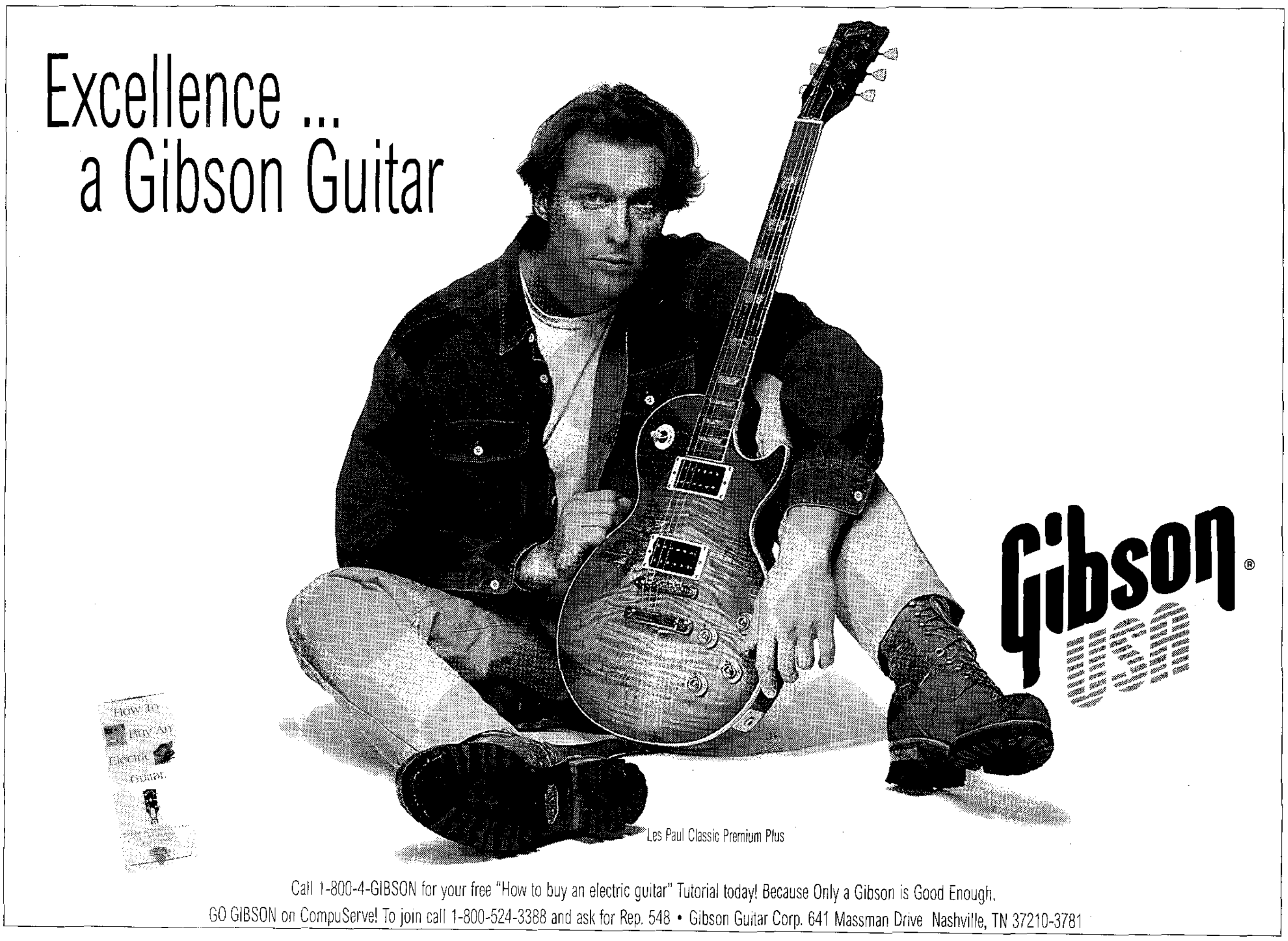
In France, the Catholic Church has a strong feeling that there is a place for the individual conscience offering Christian witness on the issues of the day, and that this place is called Protestantism. In January of last year, Bishop Gaillot was summoned to the Vatican, quizzed by the Pope, and then sent home. He couldn't very well be excommunicated, because he hadn't really done anything identifiably anti-Catholic, much less unchristian. All he had done was appear too often on television. And he couldn't be demoted, since a Catholic bishop is not a middle-management executive placed between the C.E.O. and the consumers but a divinely consecrated intermediary between man and his Messiah. Worse, a bishop has to be given a place in which to be a bishop. The rules won't let even the Pope make a bishop into a bishop-at-large or a special consulting bishop, or do any of the other things that big firms like to do with troublesome high-profile employees. (Even Arius, the father of the Arian heresy, back in the fourth century, was merely kicked over to the distant realm of Illyricum.) Then one of those minds that have kept the Catholic Church in business for two thousand years had an inspiration: Why not send Jacques Gaillot to Partenia?

So last fall Bishop Gaillot got a letter from the Pope announcing that he was now the Bishop of Partenia, and he pored over maps of France trying to figure out what, exactly, he was supposed to be the spiritual leader of. It turned out that Partenia was what Catholics call a titular see. It was more or less in Algeria and, back in the fourth century—around the time when Augustine was the Bishop of Carthage—had been a cutting-edge diocese. But then the Muslims and the sands had come, and by the sixth century Partenia was just a notional site, someplace in the Sahara. The see had never been abolished, because, metaphysically, the Diocese of Partenia remains as real a place in the mind of God as, say, the Diocese of Cleveland, and from God's point of view it is no big deal that just at the moment one place has Catholics and a ball club and the other is just a lot of sand. Deprived of a diocese that had actual, living Catholics in it, however, Gaillot would no longer have a pulpit from which to talk about uncomfortable subjects. And if he protested or refused his new posting he would be showing himself to be less God's bishop than man's.

AT this point, Léo Scheer came to the Bishop's aid. Scheer is the author of "Virtual Democracy," a visionary exploration of the consequences of the information age, and is one of those Parisian figures who somehow manage to combine a gift for abstract speculation with a sense of the main chance. He is both an insider and an outsider: although he is a vociferous critic of the French establishment, his wife, Nathalie, is the sister of the photographer Bettina Rheims, who took the official photograph of the Chirac regime; although he is team-teaching a seminar with the ornery leftist philosopher Jean Baudrillard at the Centre Pompidou, he was a founder of Canal Plus, the first French pay-TV station. He is one of Bishop Gaillot's key advisers, and it was his idea to make Partenia the first virtual diocese—to move it from the Algerian desert to the Internet. Scheer wrote, in a monthly cyberspace newsletter, "With 'I assign thee as the Bishop of a diocese that does not exist,' we also find this initial point after which nothing is possible in the real order, or anything becomes possible in the virtual order." In other words, if the Bishop of Partenia wasn't anywhere in particular he could be everywhere at once. "Instead of a metaphysical idea of a bishop, attached to a real place, we would have a metaphysical idea of a place, attached to a real bishop," Scheer said recently. "The mind of God is imitated by the virtual structure of the Internet, where the difference between physical actuality and real existence has at last been breached." What was most dismaying from the Vatican's viewpoint was that establishing Partenia as a place on the World Wide Web meant that any dissident Catholic with a computer anywhere in the world now had an impeccably orthodox diocese and a bishop to call his own.

On January 13th, the Diocese of Partenia was placed on the Internet, at http://www.partenia.fr. If you log on, you find a picture of a smiling Jacques Gaillot, and there you are, in Partenia. You can leave a letter for the Bishop. You can call up another parishioner. You can ask the Bishop to resolve a knotty theological point or to take it to some other theologian. You can form a discussion group. (You could probably play bingo, too.) The only thing you can't yet do is make your Confession or receive Communion, and on these points Bishop Gaillot, who in the real world was still living with the squatters on the Rue du Dragon, until last month, when they all moved out, sounds cautious. "There are various degrees of Presence" is the way he addresses this point, knowing that there are still people in the Vatican who find an old-timey charm in words like "heretic," "schism," and "burned to a crisp." He elaborates, saying, "There are many kinds of Presence, and a slow ascension from the degrees of Presence is part of the mystery of religion. Right now, the community of believers needs a physical Presence for the sacraments. But who knows what the future may bring?"

Immediately after Partenia went on line, the French papers were filled with the fine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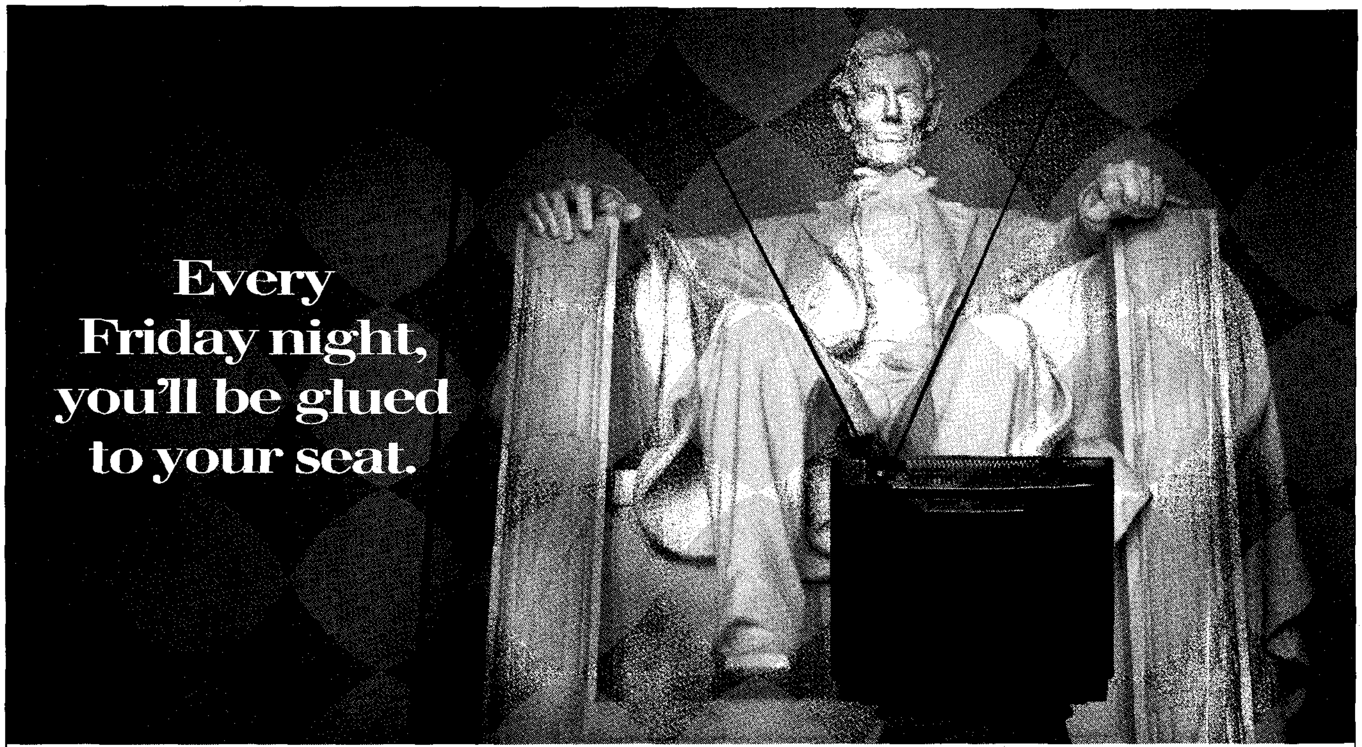
points of the theological debate. *Le Figaro* came out strongly against the Bishop, mocking him for imagining that "his" people would be served by the Internet, since none of the excluded had computers. (*Le Figaro* believes in a strongly authoritarian line in religious matters: on Christmas Day, it published an unforgettable editorial in praise of Quirinius—the Roman bureaucrat who, in the Gospel of St. Luke, ordered the census that drove Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem—on the ground that you couldn't have the Incarnation without an administrative decree to get it started.) *Libération* was, just as predictably, strongly for.

The virtual diocese alone might not have been enough to nudge France on line. It was just as the papers were filled with the virtual Bishop, however, that Mitterrand's prostate got downloaded, too, and the two events achieved, as Jean Baudrillard said, "critical cybernetic mass." Almost immediately after Mitterrand's death, from prostate cancer, one of his doctors, Claude Gubler, revealed that the disease had in fact been diagnosed just after his first election to the Presidency, in 1981, which meant that the official announcements of his good health issued regularly from the Élysée over all those years had been lies. On January 17th, Gubler actually published an (extremely dull) book on the subject called "Le Grand Secret." That day, forty thousand copies of the book were sold; the next day, at the urging of the Mitterrand family, the book was banned—a fate that usually strikes grungier books, like a recent one that cast Tintin as a drunk.

But then a computer enthusiast named Pascal Barbraud, who was running a cyber-crêperie in the little town of Besançon, had the idea of putting the entire text of "Le Grand Secret" on the Internet, where it would be immune from prosecution—or, anyway, impossible to censor. Before he was stopped, less than a week later, ten thousand copies had been downloaded. This produced a catastrophic event—a jurisdictional vacuum. The president of the Commission on Laws of the National Assembly said that it was his job to pass a law against stuff like this, while the head of the Superior Council on the Audiovisual said that it was his. Then the National Union of Telematics said that the Internet should be outside the control of the council, and accused the National Assembly of "senseless pretensions." The Minister of Technology appeared on television to announce that he could foresee a division of the Internet into three "planets"—one for research, one for commerce, and one for "anarchic interchange," anarchism on line having to be guaranteed in France by a government rule. Meanwhile, people kept downloading the book.

If it's the CB-radio side of the Internet that makes it meaningful in America—the promise of community, of shared ideas, of discussion groups and bulletin boards—just the opposite is true in France. The French already have plenty of community, even though it often looks like contentiousness. What inspires the French, by contrast, is the idea of transgression, of a secret fraternity—the Internet as a lodge or an illicit church.

Back in Paris, the Bishop himself seems a little bemused to find himself a new-millennium figure. "The Church has been organized vertically,



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when we ought to be organized horizontally," he said recently over coffee in a friend's apartment. Gaillot is calm and soft-spoken, with a shining, surprised, eyebrows-up expression. His diffidence can seem purposeful, not to say practiced, or maybe even sly. (Just last December, he had a second, post-Partenia interview with the Pope. "Why are you so *médiatique*?" the Holy Father asked the Bishop. "I'm just trying to be like you," Gaillot answered humbly.) "Of course, the primitive Church was a kind of Internet itself, which was one of the reasons it was so difficult for the Roman Empire to combat it. The early Christians understood that what was most important was not to claim physical power in a physical place but to establish a network of believers—to be on line. I think of Paul, for instance, when he had to decide whether to travel to Jerusalem or to Rome, and chose instead to go to Asia Minor—to sidestep the vertical hierarchy by moving horizontally. The Church has always prospered when it moves horizontally and suffered when it becomes locked vertically." Gaillot is still waiting to see how his diocese will prosper. "I have heard from many, many people," he said. "I got a nice letter from someone in Quebec: 'Better a real bishop in a virtual diocese than what we've got, a virtual bishop in a real Diocese.' Of course, what the other bishops will say about this is anyone's guess."

He went on, "You know the strangest thing about the invention of Partenia? It is that I have probably been there. Physically, I mean. I did my military service in Algeria, many years ago. It's possible that at some time or other I drove through Partenia and saw the diocese where I would become bishop—which then existed as a holy place only in the mind of God, and now exists as a series of electrons racing through the world. Once the Spirit enters the world, anything is possible."

Meanwhile, Barbraud, the owner of the cyber-crêperie, has been arrested in an unrelated child-support case and is being held until the French government figures out what to do with him and which ministry ought to do it. Bishop Gaillot is waiting for a reaction from the Vatican. At dinner at the Brasserie Lipp the other night, around the corner from the real Bishop, someone had a good idea. "What Barbraud ought to do," he said, "is ask for a laptop to be brought to his cell, find Partenia, and ask the Bishop for sanctuary." ♦

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A DEATH FOR DIXIE

Michael Westerman was a rowdy nineteen-year-old who drove around Todd County, Kentucky, with a Confederate flag flying from his pickup. Then he died for it, and the new network of resentment won't let him rest.

BY TONY HORWITZ

MICHAEL WESTERMAN, his mother says, "was a country boy and proud of it." He drove a big Chevy four-by-four with the chassis jacked high above oversized tires and bought a decal that said "Redneck Ride." He loved Jeff Foxworthy jokes ("You might be a redneck if you've ever taken a beer to a job interview"), and when he wasn't cutting logs in the woods he wore what amounted to a personal uniform: black Levi's, black cowboy hat, cowboy boots, and a belt buckle the size of a salad plate. Soon after his nineteenth birthday, nearly two years ago, Westerman got a tattoo on his arm of the cartoon character Tasmanian Devil clutching a Confederate battle flag. He also welded a pole to the toolbox in the back of his pickup so that he could display a large Confederate flag there. "That flag was a symbol of him," his sister-in-law Sarah Belanger says. "He was a rebel, a daredevil, outspoken. He'd do anything."

Rebel flags are common in Todd County, Kentucky, a rural enclave an hour's drive north of Nashville, Tennessee. Sports teams at the county's high school are called the Rebels and have as their mascot two flag-holding Confederates. But the sight of Westerman's banner streaming behind the big red pickup—which also had a rebel-flag license plate—caught the eye of young blacks in Todd County. "It's a flag for people that liked slaves," one of them later said.

Westerman had grown up in the small town of Guthrie, which lies in former plantation country at Todd County's southern edge, straddling the Tennessee line. Last year, during the three-day weekend marking Martin Luther King, Jr.,'s birthday, a biker bar called Redbone's Saloon posted flyers proclaiming "Fuck Martin Luther King's B.Day" and inviting people to a "Thank God for James Earl Ray Party." The flyers promised a pool tournament and "Chicken-Ribs-Fixins" for three dollars a plate.

That Saturday afternoon, in Guthrie's black neighborhood, a seventeen-year-old named Damien Darden, who had borrowed his mother's car, was collecting friends for a trip to the movies. When Darden made a stop on Guthrie's main street, Michael Westerman drove past, pulling into a convenience store called Janie's Market. Darden had previously seen a red truck with a rebel flag cruising through black areas of Guthrie. "Let's go whip that dude," he declared, according to testimony by one of the car's passengers, and sped off to find friends who might want to join the fight.

Westerman pumped some gas and bought watermelon bubble gum. He climbed back in the truck and sat for a while, chatting with his wife, Hannah. The couple weren't in any hurry. High-school sweethearts, they'd married soon after graduation, and a year later Hannah gave birth, prematurely, to twins. Now, five weeks after the birth, Michael and Hannah had left the babies with relatives and were headed off for their first evening alone since becoming parents. They planned to buy Hannah a denim dress and then drive into Nashville for dinner.

Damien Darden drove back to Janie's accompanied by another car of black teen-agers. Hannah saw a youth lean out a window of one of the cars, pointing at the truck and laughing. Then Darden pulled up close to the truck. He and two of his friends later testified that a hand reached through the sliding back window of the truck's cab and shook the rebel flag. One of the teen-agers said someone shouted "Niggers!" Hannah testified that neither she nor her husband said or did anything. Because the truck had tinted windows, the teen-agers never saw who was inside.

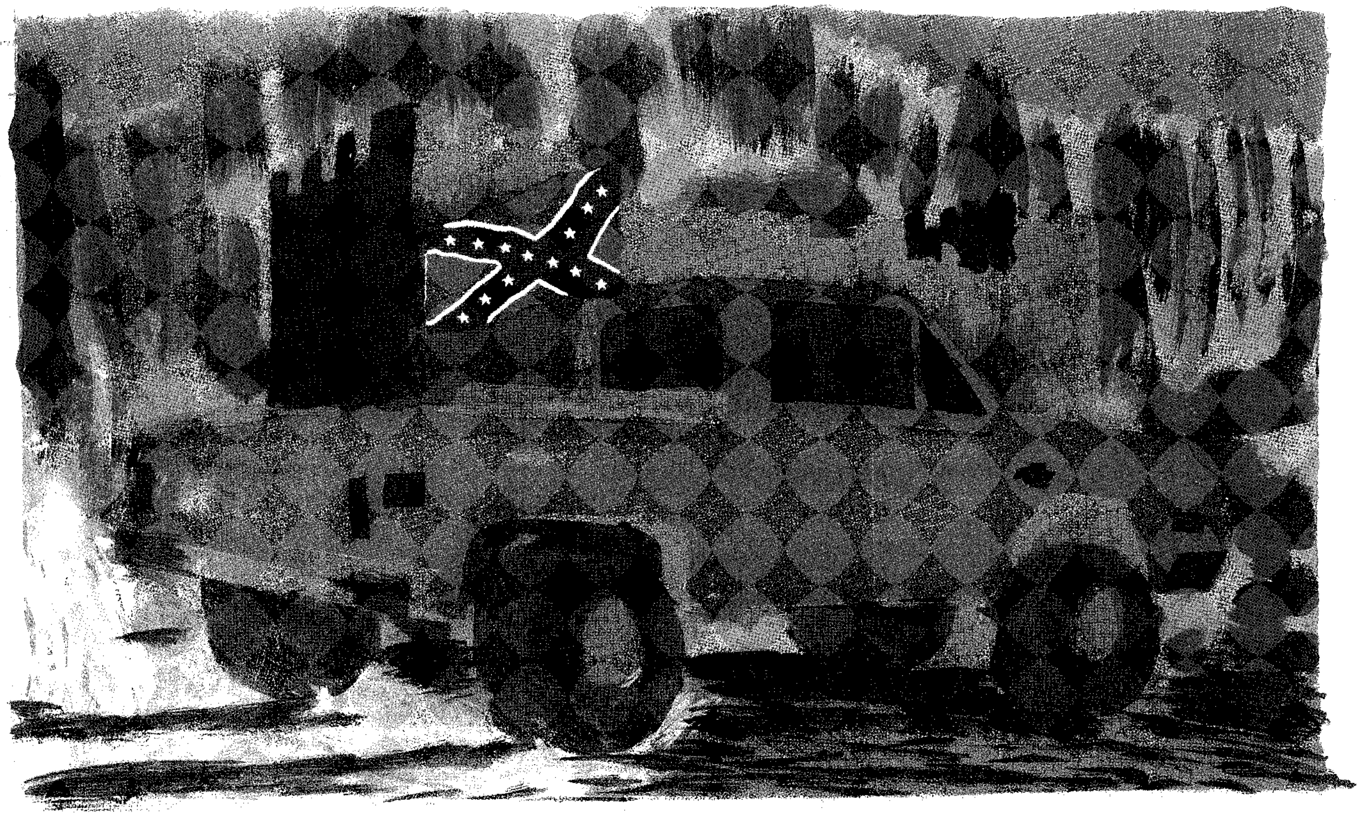
A moment later, Westerman pulled out of Janie's and drove south. Near the Tennessee line, where Guthrie gives way to tobacco fields, Hannah glanced back and saw the cars from Janie's Market trailing behind. "Kick it!" she said, and Westerman floored the accelerator.

In the back seat of Darden's car, a seventeen-year-old named Freddie Morrow told his friends he had a gun. "No, you don't!" the others taunted. Morrow lifted his shirt to reveal a cheap .32 pistol tucked in his pants, and as the car began to catch up with Westerman's truck he fired his gun wildly out the window. Then the gun jammed. Darden accelerated, and pulled into the oncoming lane. The car and the truck now raced side by side, at eighty-five miles an hour. Westerman pushed his wife to the floor. Morrow stuck his hand out the passenger-side window and fired again.

Hannah didn't hear the blast, but she saw her husband clutch his side and heard him moan, "Oh, my God, they shot me." She scrambled over him into the driver's seat. Darden's car had stopped in the road just ahead, beside a grain elevator. The other car from Janie's had pulled up close behind the pickup. Hannah thought they were trying to box her in. She swerved off the road, bounced into a ditch, then did a U-turn and bumped back onto the road headed north to Kentucky.

By the time she reached a hospital emergency room, twenty minutes later, Westerman was in shock. The bullet had passed through his heart. Surgeons closed the wound and rushed him by ambulance to Nashville, but he died the next day. When police searched his truck, they found a single bullet hole in the door, a loaded .380 automatic that belonged to Westerman, and his black cowboy hat with a big wad of watermelon bubble gum stuck to the brim.

After the shooting, Darden, Morrow, and the other teen-agers had returned to Guthrie. The group never made it to the movie they'd planned to see: "Higher Learning," a film about racial tension at a college campus in which white supremacists gather around a rebel flag and gun down a black student. Instead, late that night, they turned themselves in to the police.



Westerman's motives are obscure, but his flag sent a clear message to blacks: "We knew it made them mad," a friend recalls.

GARY PANTER

As news of the incident spread across the South, conservative guardians of Southern heritage pronounced Michael Westerman a Confederate martyr and the first man to die under the rebel flag in a hundred and thirty years. He was buried in a Confederate-flag-draped coffin, and his grave became a Confederate shrine, with latter-day rebels trekking to Guthrie to pay their respects. But the drama that unfolded in the year following Westerman's death—Klan protests, a school-mascot fight, cries for secession, and a courtroom recitation from the Gettysburg Address—revealed that Michael Westerman had also become a catalyst for a very contemporary conflict: over race, over memory, over civil rights. Like the flag on his truck, Westerman and the black teen-agers arrested for his murder have become potent symbols in a cultural war flaring across the South. It is a struggle fuelled by a burgeoning and sophisticated cadre of Southern "nationalists" who feed on modern fears of dwindling status and on nostalgic images of a South that is cohesive, distinct, and independent from the rest of America.

LATE on the night of Westerman's death, a cross made of scrap lumber burned by the road outside Guthrie. Police suspected at first that the incident, like the James Earl Ray barbecue at Redbone's Saloon, was a protest against the Martin Luther King, Jr., holiday, but over the next few days three more crosses went up in flames—two on Guthrie's main street and one in front of the house where the gunman, Freddie Morrow, lived. The F.B.I. investigated but made no arrests.

Redbone's Saloon forms Guthrie's southern portal, so I stopped in there on my first trip to town, a week after Westerman's burial. From the outside, the saloon looked like a bunker: squat, cinder block, with slit windows cloaked in wire mesh. Inside, Redbone himself, a ruddy-bearded man, stood behind the bar wearing a polka-dot cap and a T-shirt adorned with a swastika. He served me a beer, then turned to chat with a man whose shirtfront proclaimed, "I've Got a Nigger in My Family Tree." The back of the shirt showed a lynching—a black man dangling from a branch.

On the saloon's walls, mixed with the usual biker-bar décor—a half-naked woman splayed across a Harley-Davidson, a pistol mounted on a piece of wood bearing the words "We Don't Bother Calling 911"—was an odd anthology of hand-scrawled verse. Most of it mingled biker and Confederate themes, such as a poem describing a motorcycle tour of the ruined South of 1865, one verse of which read:

Riding through the fog,
Rebel flag in hand,
Fighting for my freedom,
Fighting for my land.

At the bottom appeared a cryptic insignia: "F.T.W."

I asked the man sitting beside me what the letters stood for.

"Who's asking?" he said. "F.B.I.?"

This brought howls from the others at the bar. I told him I was a writer, not a cop.

He looked at me dubiously but said, "F.T.W.—Fuck the World."

Another man, bulging from a Lynyrd Skynyrd T-shirt, lurched over and barked, "Write this in your damned notebook!" He ranted about the blacks accused of killing Michael Westerman, and concluded, "You've got your K.K.K. and your B.B.B.—that's Badass Black Brothers. Two sides of the same coin."

He sat down with a thud and gazed blankly at the television behind the bar. Male figure skaters glided across the screen. As I scribbled down his words, I sensed someone standing behind me and turned to confront a long-haired giant. Bending so that his bloodshot eyes bore into mine, he said, by way of introduction, "I shit out a turd this morning that was bigger than you."

I nodded toward the door and said, "Maybe I should just—"

The giant grabbed one sleeve of my jacket and ripped it cleanly from armpit to wrist. Redbone lunged across the bar and seized the man's other arm, shouting "Cool it!" This allowed me to dash through the door and down the road toward town, which announced itself with a sign that read:

Welcome to Guthrie
Birthplace of Robert Penn Warren
First Poet Laureate of the United States.

UNTIL Michael Westerman's death drew rebel-flag supporters from across the South, Guthrie, Kentucky, attracted only two types of travellers: literary pilgrims looking for Warren's home, and Tennesseans seeking lottery tickets available only on the Kentucky side of the line. When Warren grew up there, in the early years of the century, Guthrie was a bustling new railroad town with little sense of history—"very un-Southern," as Warren later described it. Today, though, Guthrie exhales the depleted air of so many rural towns across the South, bypassed by the interstate and drained of vitality by decades of migration to the city. It has a Piggly Wiggly supermarket, the American Café ("Country cookin' makes you good lookin' "), a corn warehouse, a garment factory, a company that creosotes railroad ties, and convenience stores crowded with people scratching lottery tickets. "We're a little ole Southern Mayberry," said Scott Marshall, a portly, bluff paramedic who is also Guthrie's mayor, as he swept the floor in the small town hall. "Of course, like every Southern town—like every town in America, probably—there's room for improvement between the races."

More than a third of Guthrie's sixteen hundred residents are black. The Mayor and the six town-council members are white. Both the ruling body of Todd County and its school board are also all white. Near Guthrie's town hall stands a derelict shop that briefly housed a tattoo parlor last year. "It was a front for the Klan," the Mayor told me. There used to be a swimming pool in Guthrie, but a few years ago some whites griped about blacks swimming there, and the motelkeepers who owned the pool filled it with dirt rather than let it become the scene of racial strife.

Most parts of the South confronted such frictions and inequities decades ago and have struggled ever since, fitfully and sometimes unwillingly, to overcome them. But Todd County doesn't belong to the New South of Atlanta or Charlotte, or to the stereotypical Old South of rural Alabama or Mississippi. Strictly speaking, it doesn't belong to the former Confederacy at all, since Kentucky never seceded from the Union, and Todd County was divided in its sympathies during the Civil War.

Because segregation never became as formalized here as it did farther south, the civil-rights movement more or less bypassed Todd County, and so did many of the dramatic social changes obvious across the Deep South. Even so, one-on-one race relations in Guthrie often exhibit an intimacy and informality uncommon in the North. Michael Westerman grew up on the same street of brick ranch houses in Guthrie as two of the teen-agers who were charged with his murder. They went to the same schools and shot hoops in the Westermans' driveway. A close relative of one of the boys was a member of the volunteer fire department along with Westerman's father, David, who farms for a living. Westerman's mother, JoAnn, runs a sewing machine at Guthrie Garment, and says she has worked amicably beside black women there for years.

But in the early nineties this racial détente began to come apart—most noticeably at Todd County Central High School. With a low-slung brick façade, bright halls, and computer labs, Todd Central looks like any other public high school, except for a rebel flag on its doormat and, over the trophy case, a vast mural depicting the school's mascots: two pudgy Confederates, known to some as "the fat men," who hold battle flags and blow bugles emitting the printed words "Go Rebels, Go." In the sixties, the yearbook, entitled *The Rebel*, featured two students annually anointed the General and His Southern Lady and photographed in Confederate uniform and hoopskirt.

Locals, when asked why the high school is such a Confederate redoubt, point to Todd County's most revered native son—Jefferson Davis, the Confederate President, who until the age of two lived in a log homestead on what is now the county's western edge. The site is marked by an obelisk, two-thirds as tall as the Washington Monument. Each June, in honor of Davis's birthday, the concrete spike forms the backdrop for the crowning of a local teen-ager as Miss Confederacy.

For decades, blacks in Todd County quietly endured the exaltation of the rebel flag and the defunct nation for which it stands. Black athletes at Todd Central dribbled basketballs across a huge flag painted on the gym floor. Some wore class rings decorated with a rebel soldier. "It never really dawned on me what the flag represented," I was told by Kim Gardner, a black 1980 graduate. Even if it had bothered her, she added, she doubted whether she'd have done much. "Back then, parents told you to sit your butt down, work hard, and keep your mouth shut around white people."

Gradually, though, black attitudes changed in Todd County, as they had already changed across much of the South. Public hostility toward the flag and other Confederate totems, which had been largely dormant since the early seventies, resurfaced in the eighties and has intensified ever since. In 1987, the Southeast Region of the N.A.A.C.P. passed a resolution condemning the rebel flags flying over four Southern capitols. Fights over the flag, over the playing of "Dixie," and over "Old South" balls erupted on many college campuses and in some high schools. In some cities, blacks began complaining about ubiquitous Confederate monuments and street names. In 1993, Senator Carol Moseley-Braun, of Illinois, successfully challenged renewal of the congressional patent for the United Daughters of the Confederacy insignia. Movies like Spike Lee's "Malcolm X" and music groups like South Carolina's Da Phlayva, which reproduced the Confederate flag in African-liberation colors on a CD cover, aroused militancy among blacks too young to remember the civil-rights era.

Growing black anger over emblems of the Confederacy has provoked a backlash among some Southern whites, many of whom already felt aggrieved over the Martin Luther King, Jr., holiday, affirmative action, and other race-tinged issues. When Spike Lee's movie launched a wave of "X" clothing, for instance, a symbol sprouted on T-shirts and bumper stickers across the South: it showed the diagonal cross of the rebel flag beside the words "You Wear Your X, I'll Wear Mine."

BY the time Marcus Flippin became a teacher and sports coach at Todd Central, in 1992, students were brandishing their separate "X"s like duelling pistols. White students went as far as to fly the flag from their farm vehicles during a Future Farmers of America event called Tractor Day. Blacks, who saw news reports about the flag coming down in public places elsewhere in the South, often complained to Flippin, one of only three black teachers at the school. "They'd ask, 'How can they get away with it here in Todd?' " he recalls.

Flippin also learned that coaches of visiting teams were using the gym-floor painting of the flag to whip up black players, saying, "You know that that flag represents slavery and the Klan. We have to go over and show those racists." When he told school officials what was happening, they agreed to repaint the floor with an innocuous outline of Todd County. This move enraged some whites and provoked sharper skirmishes. Graffiti saying "K.K.K." began appearing in school bathrooms. Once, a white student drove his truck past a group of blacks dragging a black Barbie doll by a chain from its bumper.

Flippin's first year at Todd Central was the last for Michael Westerman, who graduated in 1993. Tall, slim, and muscular, with long dark hair and an engaging smile, Westerman was named Future Homemakers of America Sweetheart his senior year. A mediocre student, he struggled through with the help of his longtime girlfriend, Hannah Laster. In their prom picture, Hannah wears a hot-pink ball gown and Michael a tuxedo jacket and a bow tie with his black Levi's and black cowboy hat.

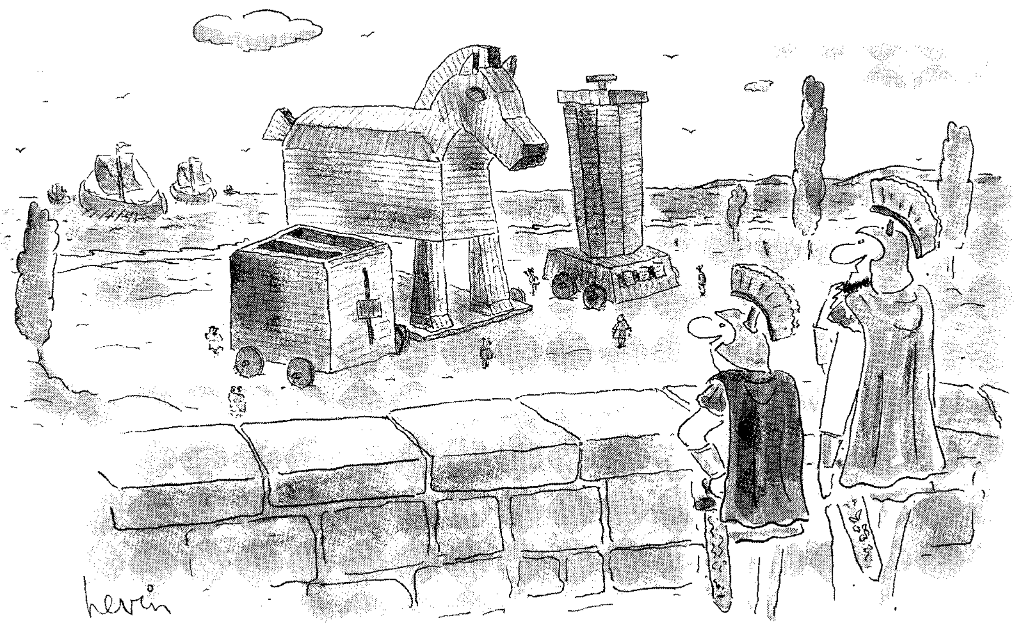
After graduation, Hannah drove a forklift at her father's sawmill, and Westerman went to work there, too. Hannah's father, Billy Laster, is built like the trees that churn through his mill, and he prescribes work as the remedy for all ills. His wife, Nancy, like other women in her fundamentalist church, hews to a Biblical injunction against women cutting their hair, and hers is pinned up into a gray helmet rising six inches above her head. Westerman's parents are also hard-working, churchgoing folk, and they, too, married as teen-agers and rarely venture beyond Todd County.

When members of the two families recall Michael Westerman, they smile and roll their eyes, choosing words like "clown" and "character." He played pranks, made animal noises, licked his sister's face, told jokes about fat people. "Michael picked and plucked at people and laughed about everything," Nancy Laster says. But this "big picker," as Hannah calls him, wasn't always so endearing to those outside his family. Todd County is an insular place, and one does well to keep unflattering opinions of the deceased to oneself. In private, though, some of Westerman's acquaintances describe him as a loud, hot-tempered teen-ager who liked to party hard and whose joking and roughhousing were often grating and occasionally threatening.

Former co-workers across the state line, in Clarksville, Tennessee, speak more openly. At the Holiday Inn, where Westerman washed dishes his senior year, Lydia Kurz, a waitress, remembers a "goofy, obnoxious, and ignorant" teen-ager who read comic books and pestered the other staff—particularly Lydia's friend and fellow Jehovah's Witness, a waitress who has since left. One day, Westerman lifted the friend up and pinned her against the wall while she screamed, "Put me down!" When a black cook intervened, Westerman shouted racial slurs at him. Soon after the incident, Westerman was fired. Lydia's friend told me that she wasn't surprised by the news that Michael had been killed by blacks who felt provoked by the flag in his truck. He felt that "everyone around him needed to know he was bigger than them," she said.

It was an aunt of Michael's named Brenda Arms who first got Michael interested in the Confederate flag. The unofficial family historian, she wanted her nephew to honor his Confederate forebears. As Michael grew up, a childhood flag moved from his bedroom wall to his bicycle, then to his first car. "He treasured that flag just the way I do the doll I've been carrying around since I was a little girl," Brenda told me, with tears in her eyes.

Everyone has a different theory about what, precisely, the flag—on his arm, on his truck, on his wall—meant to Westerman. Brenda Arms is sure that it reflected



"The horse is nice, but we could really use the blender."

the same pride she feels in her Southern heritage. Others suspect that it was a more generalized expression of his hell-raising nature. Hannah's father thinks that Michael was displaying loyalty to the Rebels of Todd Central. Almost nobody believes that he was making a conscious political statement, though white classmates acknowledge that the flag sent a message to blacks. "We knew it made them mad," a friend of his told me.

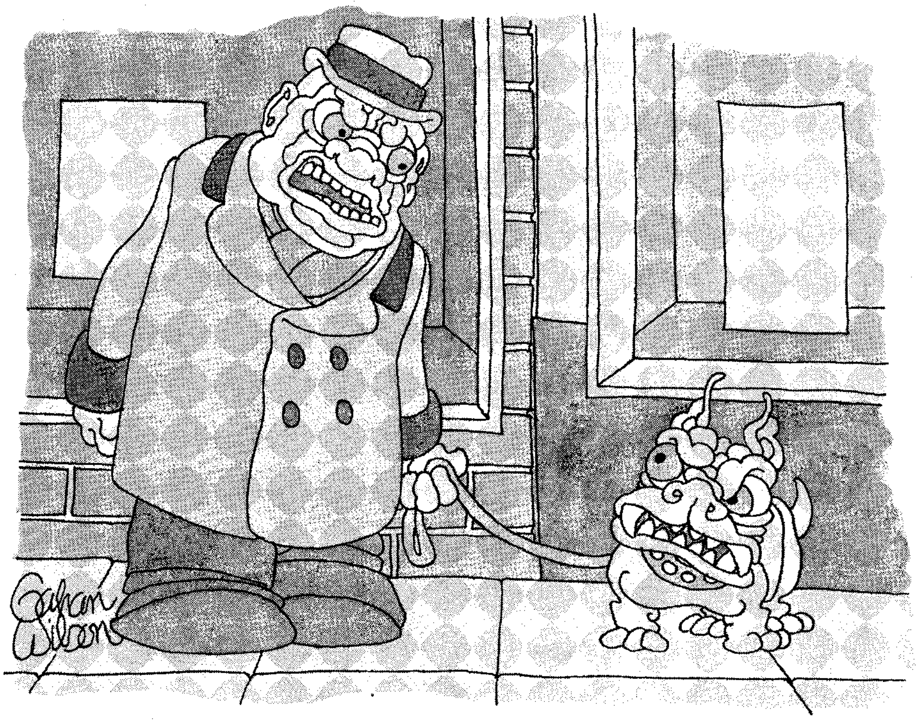
I saw the pickup for the first time during one of many memorials held in Westerman's honor, this one a procession of rebel-flag-waving motorcyclists called Freedom Ride '95. Hannah, a tall, hefty woman with permed strawberry-blond hair, stood by the cab dry-eyed, popping bubble gum, as well-wishers filed solemnly by, poking their little fingers in the small bullet hole in the door and peering at Westerman's cowboy hat, perched on the dashboard, with the bubble gum still stuck to it. The flag flapped from its pole in back, as it had on the day he was killed. "He wasn't into all the Confederate history, and that," Hannah told me. Then why, I asked her, did Michael fly the flag from his pickup? She shrugged, and said, "He'd do anything to make his truck look sharp. The truck's red. The flag's red. They match."

During Westerman's senior year at Todd Central, Freddie Morrow arrived from Chicago's South Side. His father, who had died in a car wreck soon after Freddie's birth, had grown up in Guthrie, so when Freddie got into trouble as a teen-ager in Chicago his mother sent him to live with an aunt in Kentucky, hoping that a fresh start in the small Southern town would settle him down.

At first, it did. Morrow began going with a girl and attending church with his relatives. The Kentucky quiet agreed with him. But Morrow, with his baggy jeans and earring and gang tattoo, stood out at Todd Central. White teachers kept a wary eye on this city kid who had been in trouble up North, and he confirmed their fears when he talked back to them and got into frequent fights. Before long, he'd racked up so many suspensions that he was forced to repeat his sophomore year.

The following fall, he got into a dispute with a girl in Clarksville, the nearest city to Guthrie, and someone threatened to kill him. That's when Morrow got his gun, a Czech semiautomatic he bought from a white guy for fifty dollars at an abandoned baseball diamond in Guthrie. He got bullets at the Wal-Mart in Clarksville. That evening, he showed off his new purchase to a friend, firing several rounds into the air. "It just felt like all my worries was through," Morrow later recalled.

Morrow didn't know Westerman, and until he moved to Guthrie he didn't know much about the rebel flag, either. "I thought it was just the 'Dukes of Hazzard' sign," he said, referring to the TV series featuring a car decorated with a rebel flag. But he quickly picked up on the local black hostility to the flag. "They was telling me about how they had a war for it back in the days and all this," he said. And he sensed that to white students "it means white pride and continued slavery." But he also suspected that whites brandished the flag mainly as a sort of schoolyard challenge, "just doing it out of spite, to see what we would do."



"Good dog!"

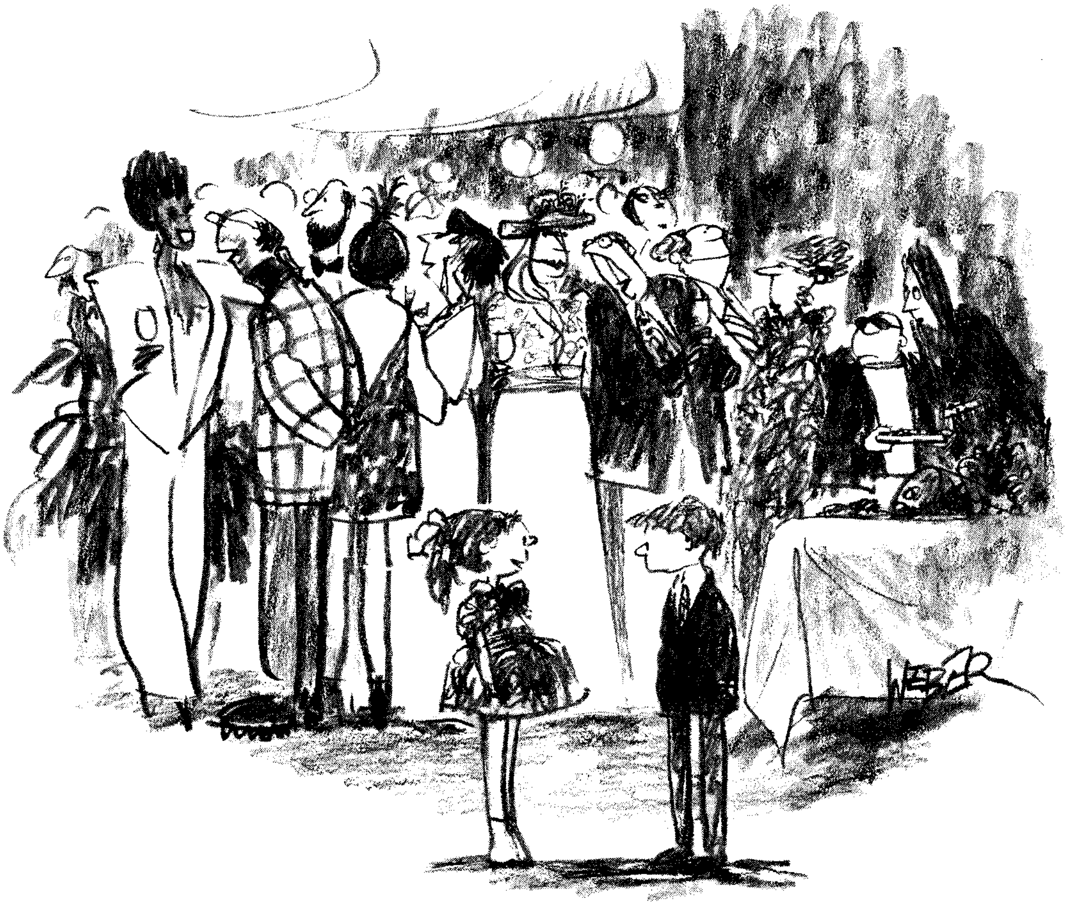
Todd County's main crossroads lies eleven miles north of Guthrie, in Elkton, the county seat. It was here, near Todd Central, that Westerman sometimes cruised with his flag, circling the courthouse square and crawling past an adjoining series of fast-food joints. In a county with no mall or movie theatre, looping between the Dairy Mart and Dairy Queen supplies about the only action available. Teen-agers in Todd County call this fifties-style ritual "flipping the dip."

When I first visited Elkton, on a Sunday morning in January soon after Westerman's death, the dip was flipping with at least five flag-toting trucks. There were also two cars with holes crudely drilled in their roofs and flagpoles poking out. One member of this makeshift color guard—an unemployed car mechanic, who was wearing a reproduction Confederate kepi and carrying a .22 pistol—had been flying the flag each day since Westerman's death. "One goes down, two fill his space," he said.

Nearby, standing at each corner of Elkton's square, a dozen people clad in jungle fatigues and combat boots were handing out flyers to the after-church traffic. "Literature roadblock," one man explained, offering me several mimeographed sheets. One was headed, "The Only Reason You Are White Today Is Because Your Ancestors Practiced & Believed in Segregation YESTERDAY!"

The literature was signed "Ron Edwards, Grand Dragon for Christ, Race & Nation." Edwards was the Klansman who now stood before me, barking undragonlike orders into a walkie-talkie. "Cross the street only on the crosswalks, and stay on the goddam sidewalks!" he adjured his underlings. He looked at me and said, "I don't want us to break any laws." Edwards explained that he was the ruler over "the Realm of Kentucky," and he introduced me to two of his underlings—an Exalted Cyclops named Jim Burleson and a Klaliff named Velma Seats, a fifty-one-year-old seamstress and crafts dealer who wore furry earmuffs, boots, and green mittens. "Jelly doughnut?" she asked, proffering a cardboard box.

Passing cars honked, and their drivers gave the thumbs-up sign. When a burly man in a farm cap stopped to grouse, "I've had enough of niggers telling us what to do," Burleson and Seats escorted him to a rusted Buick parked nearby. "You can get started today for just twenty-five dollars and two photos," Burleson explained. "And if your wife wants to join, too, the price is the same." He paused. "That's sort of a special we have going now."



"The minute you walked into the room, I said to myself, 'Now, he *looks interesting.' "*

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While Burleson recruited the man, Seats told me about her grandchildren and her craft shop, and about an upcoming cross-burning, at which she'd don a satin robe and sheets. I asked why she and the others weren't wearing their Klan robes today.

"We've had a lot of events lately," she said. "The cleaning bills will kill you."

The Klan passed out seven hundred and fifty flyers and claimed ten new members. For a month, the literature roadblock became a Sunday ritual in Elkton and Guthrie. It drove some blacks indoors and disgusted many whites, who, like the vast majority of Southerners, regard the Klan as a buffoonish group beloved of TV cameras but no longer a terrifying force. Klanwatch, an Alabama-based group that monitors racist organizations, estimates active Klan membership at about fifty-five hundred nationwide—half of what it was in the early nineteen-eighties and down from forty-two thousand in 1965. However, white-supremacist groups whose beliefs often overlap with the Klan's, such as the Aryan Nation and some parts of the militia movement, are growing, and Klanwatch estimates that since 1990 the overall number of white supremacists has increased from twenty-two thousand to twenty-five thousand.

What moderates in Todd County genuinely feared was the way extremists of all kinds were using Westerman's murder to inflame and divide their community, poisoning its image and its precarious racial peace. At an Elkton restaurant, one prominent businessperson told me, "There's an element out there, not in what I'd call the mainstream, that's making a hero out of someone who shouldn't be, and stirring up feelings that were best left in the closet." During six visits to Todd County, I often heard similar laments from merchants, ministers, teachers, and town officials. But they refused to speak out publicly.

The writer and historian Shelby Foote later explained this reticence by citing a historic parallel. Like many Southerners, he feels that vilification of the Confederate battle flag is historically misplaced, for the flag was designed as a combat standard and was revered by veterans as a symbol of valor and sacrifice, not of slavery. But Foote blames "right-minded" Southerners for the flag's fall into "shame and disgrace." When segregationists in this century seized the banner as a symbol of resistance to civil rights, "responsible people of the South" stood silently by—out of fear, Foote says, or out of secret sympathy with the racists. The same dynamic now seemed to be at work in the hushed homes and offices of southern Kentucky.

ZEALOTS, meanwhile, were only too happy to fill the void. Soon after Westerman's death, Frances Chapman, a retired nurse who wears oversized glasses and electric-green pants suits, declared on local radio, "Slavery was not all that bad." Her comments came as part of a rabid defense of the Todd Central mascot. A school-board subcommittee meeting the week before Westerman's death had recommended that the rebel mascots and their flags be abandoned to help overcome "barriers to education." When news of the recommendation leaked out, a few days after Westerman's death, many whites became enraged. As they saw it, Westerman's shooting and the attack on the mascot by local "élites" meeting behind closed doors were of a piece, part of a campaign to elevate blacks at the expense of whites. "Don't put *us* where *they* used to be," Chapman told me, and went on to say that if whites surrendered the flag to blacks, "it'll just be a matter of time before they want something else."

So Chapman began circulating a petition threatening nonpayment of taxes to the school system if the mascot changed. Then, three weeks after Westerman's funeral, she and hundreds of other whites, including Hannah Westerman and her parents, packed a school-board meeting. Many wore kepis, battle-flag bandannas, and T-shirts that Chapman had had printed for the occasion; they pictured the flag with the words "Show Respect—You're in Rebel Country."

Speakers were permitted to talk for three minutes each. One of the first was an elderly woman who said of her late husband, "He was a Yankee, and I converted him to a rebel and I'm damned proud of it!" She threw open her sweater to expose her "Show Respect" T-shirt, and the crowd roared.

Another woman jabbed her finger at the school board and yelled, "Listen to us—we put you there!" She told how her son at Todd Central had been forced to turn a rebel-flag T-shirt inside out to avoid provoking a fight during the week after Westerman's death. (Metal detectors had also been used at the school.) "Sure ain't right!" she shouted, and the crowd began stamping its feet and chanting "Discrimination! Discrimination!"

Frances Chapman waved her petition, which now bore three thousand names—almost a quarter of the county's population—and shouted, "Don't ever count us out!" It struck me that the media attention lavished on "angry white males" neglected the considerable depth of female rage on display here, and at other gatherings in Todd County. It also became clear that the wrath exhibited at the school meeting had little to do with the flag's historic or regional symbolism. The banner seemed to have floated free from time and place and become a generalized expression of fury against blacks, school officials, authority in general—anyone or anything that could shoulder some blame for these people's difficult lives.

The handful of blacks at the meeting were stunned into silence. "They've gone loco on us," Kim Gardner, the black Todd Central grad, later told me. Before Michael Westerman's death, she went on, "I felt like they respected us." Now she feared she'd been wrong all her life. "That flag opens up a racial door we've been keeping closed for so many years," she said. "It's a way of saying what white people have kept bottled up."

White parents pulled more than sixty kids—or almost one of every nine students—out of Todd Central and schooled them at home instead. In the spring, school officials quietly shelved the recommendation to phase out the flag and the rebel mascots. On learning of that decision, Frances Chapman declared, "I feel like it's a victory not only for Kentucky but for the entire South."

Scouts from across the entire South, in fact, had long since reconnoitered Todd County, and self-styled "Southern-heritage" or "Southern-nationalist" groups quickly began exploiting Westerman's murder. These groups, which preach the gospel of states' rights, regional pride, and reverence for the Confederacy, have flourished over the past five years, sparked in large part by attacks on the rebel flag and other Old South symbols.

Heritage groups vigorously condemn the Klan, which they feel has tarred anyone who supports the rebel flag as a hatemongering bigot. Because of this disavowal, and also because they are nonviolent, heritage groups attract little of the scrutiny focussed on the Klan, neo-Nazis, and radical militias. However, the nationalist movement clearly attracts some support from the racists it repudiates.

Like the states of the former Confederacy, heritage groups belong to a decentralized and often fractious coalition. The largest and oldest heritage group is the Sons of Confederate Veterans, or S.C.V.; it has more than twenty thousand members in hundreds of local "camps" that range from rabidly political cells to bookish history clubs. The S.C.V. has been joined in recent years, and sometimes challenged, by more aggressive organizations, and the movement as a whole has become sophisticated in spreading its message. Groups communicate not only

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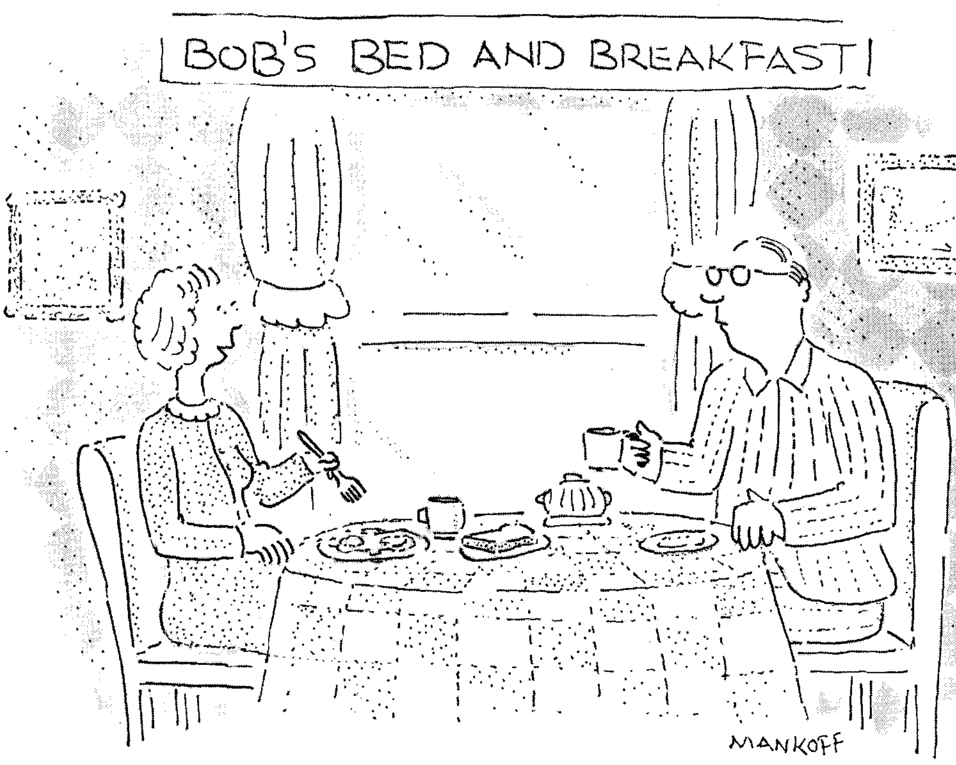
SHOWCASE
BY ANNIE LEIBOVITZ

UNDER THE SKIN

Of course Ellen DeGeneres has a mother named Betty—it fits in with her comic disguise of fresh-faced normality and healthy good humor. DeGeneres, who is thirty-eight and has been doing standup for fifteen years, is often described as a girl-next-door type, but her comedy strikes closer to home than that: she's more like a longtime roommate whose playful ease with existential absurdities lessens our own isolation. The last couple of years have seen her hanging out in more and more living rooms: her ABC sitcom, "Ellen," in which she plays the owner of an L.A. bookstore, is a hit; her book, "My Point . . . and I Do Have One," has been a best-seller for six months; and she has been the host of the Emmys and the Grammys.

Gender issues—to use the current buzz phrase—are an integral, if unstated, part of DeGeneres's presentation. Her last name is an anagram for the as yet uncoined "genderees," a word that might describe those who, like DeGeneres, feel comfortable in their own skin and are nevertheless always acutely aware of being in that particular skin—aware of the accident of gender. "I'm a person who's a woman, and I don't like dresses or panty hose or heels," she writes in "My Point." "I guess you could chuckle and say that I'm just a woman trapped in a woman's body. But, if you did say that, nobody would know what you meant, and probably more than one person would ask you to kindly stop chuckling." An old feminist saw has it that Ginger Rogers did everything that Fred Astaire did, only she did it going backward and in high heels. Ellen DeGeneres's user-friendly, Benchleyesque persona is an act that requires as much skill and much more daring, because it flies in the face of feminine conventions: she does everything that other women do, only she does it in pants and sneakers and going forward. —Nancy Franklin

Ellen DeGeneres and her mother, Betty, Los Angeles, January 7, 1996.



"Well, Bob, bed wasn't much, but, I must say, breakfast is delicious."

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through meetings and newsletters but on radio broadcasts, on Web pages with names like DixieNet, in Internet chat groups, and through 800-number hot lines that collect "heritage violations" (usually alleged insults to the flag by schools, corporations, cities, or TV shows). The Atlanta-based Heritage Preservation Association has recruited attorneys for a "legal-action network" that mimics the N.A.A.C.P.'s Legal Defense Fund, and the movement also frequently appropriates the vocabulary of victimology, depicting Southern whites as a minority subject to discrimination, and even "ethnic cleansing," by a tyrannical majority.

Some groups, like the newly formed Southern League, based in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, are headed largely by academics whose views have been aired in the Washington *Post* and other mainstream publications. The president of the Southern League, which has about three thousand members, is Michael Hill, a forty-four-year-old history professor at Stillman College, in Tuscaloosa; he calls the Southern League "paleoconservative," and declares, "If the current regime continues its tyranny, we shall not hesitate to advocate secession and self-rule for the Southern states." While the Southern League and others often echo the Agrarians of the nineteen-thirties—a group of intellectuals, including Robert Penn Warren, who felt the South's traditional culture was threatened by urban-industrial society—today's heritage groups have tailored their message to more modern and global anxieties. "The South represents the only remaining stumbling block to the imposition of an American police state," Hill proclaimed at a rally in Todd County. This state, he added, would plunge America into a "new world order" marked by a "godless" and "mongrelized" multiculturalism.

Heritage groups are active players in state politics, sometimes staging demonstrations in support of flying the rebel flag at capitols, as well as launching letter-writing and phone campaigns. The Heritage Preservation Association has a political-action committee to lobby legislators and endorse candidates, including Pat Buchanan for President. The Confederate Society of America has also endorsed Buchanan and solicits funds for his campaign in its newsletter. In a letter, Buchanan asked for the group's help, stating that Southern soldiers "didn't march into those guns in defense of slavery," and pledging, "I will defend our Southern culture in the White House." Buchanan, who has several Confederate ancestors, often sounds Southern-nationalist themes on the stump. In a recent debate in South Carolina, he defended the rebel flag on that state's capitol, calling it "a symbol of defiance, courage, bravery," and added, "Everyone should stand up for their heritage."

Like Buchanan, leaders of the heritage movement often are middle-class intellectuals who nonetheless galvanize working-class whites, many of whom feel that their fortunes have been eroding for decades. "This is a group that has really lost it in the space of a generation," John Shelton Reed, a sociologist at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, says. Part of what has been lost is economic status and political clout, Reed says, but the deepest grievances are cultural. "They feel that they don't get any respect, that their culture doesn't get any respect, and that their ancestors are being dissed."

Both white and black groups have found an endlessly renewable resource in the rebel flag. "It's a great issue for partisans on both sides to rally people around," Reed says. "There's no easy way to split the difference, and I don't know that anyone wants to. Either it's the school flag or not, the state flag or not. And, whether you win or lose, it keeps you in the public eye."

SOME members of the Sons of Confederate Veterans got in touch with the Westerman family immediately after Michael's death to offer their support, including the raising of funds for Hannah and the twins. Solicitations for the Michael Westerman Fund began appearing in newsletters and magazines published by the S.C.V. and other groups. (The national office of the S.C.V., however, kept its distance from the Westerman drama.)

Westerman's biography began to undergo a metamorphosis. Heritage groups and some family members now claimed that he'd studied his genealogy closely and planned to join the S.C.V., and a Kentucky camp inducted him posthumously. And, according to official lore, Michael and Hannah had first met on a school trip to Fort Donelson, a Civil War battle site.

Most striking of all was Westerman's grave. A granite headstone, which Hannah had helped design, bore an image of Westerman's pickup and rebel flag. The S.C.V. arranged for the site to be decorated with an iron cross identical to the crosses marking graves of actual Confederate veterans, with "C.S.A." on one side and the Confederate motto, "Deo Vindice," and "1861-1865" on the other.

Westerman's new Confederate profile appeared to comfort his relatives, providing a larger meaning to what had seemed a senseless death. Letters poured in from people across the country who wanted to express their sympathy and their support for the flag. The Klan also sent its condolences, even offering help in writing thank-you notes. "We always heard the Klan were devils," Hannah's father, Billy Laster, said. "But they seemed like nice, Christian people to me."

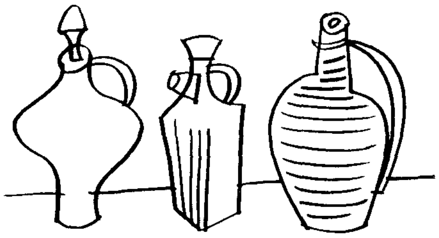
NEITHER the family nor the heritage groups wanted the Klan to distract attention from a major memorial they had planned for Westerman on March 4, 1995, which was Confederate Flag Day. The Klan more or less obliged, by staging a literature roadblock in robes and hoods but removing those garments before joining others beside Westerman's grave. The Aryan Nation also politely called ahead and agreed to leave its literature at home. A few skinheads showed up but kept a respectful distance from a four-hundred-car convoy that made its way from northern Tennessee to Guthrie's cemetery.

At the grave site, men in Confederate uniforms unfurled a rebel flag embroidered with the words "Michael Westerman Martyr" and fired muskets in salute. Women dressed as Confederate mourners wept. Then the event's main organizer, an S.C.V. "commander" named William Rolen, eulogized Westerman for joining "the Confederate dead under the same honorable circumstances" as those who fell in battle.

The convoy wound across the county to the Jefferson Davis memorial, where family members stood before the monument and shared new details about Westerman's life. His aunt Brenda Arms said that his "main interests involved relatives that fought during the Civil War and Vietnam." His father said that his son died because of his "beliefs and his constitutional rights." Then speakers from across the South strode up the steps, and the memorial became a political rally. An official of the Heritage Preservation Association ripped into the N.A.A.C.P., Queer Nation, and "the goose-stepping storm troopers of the political-correctness movement." Jared Taylor, a writer on race relations who edits a newsletter called *American Renaissance*, cited statistics about black-on-white crime: "Any given black person is about seventeen times more likely to kill a white person than the other way around." He listed brutal black-on-white murders, rhetorically asking the crowd each time, "Are we to remain silent?" Some in the crowd chanted, "It's time for revenge!"

Michael Hill, of the Southern League, linked Westerman's murder to the F.B.I. actions against the Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas, and against the white separatist Randy Weaver at Ruby Ridge, Idaho. He said that the message of all these incidents was "It is open season on anyone who has the audacity to question the dictates of an all-powerful federal government or the illicit rights bestowed on a compliant and deadly underclass that now fulfills a role similar to that of Hitler's brown-shirted street thugs in the nineteen-thirties." This was a long way from the Confederacy, but, then, the speeches weren't really about the South, and Westerman had metamorphosed again, from a Confederate martyr into a front-line soldier in a contemporary culture war.

As William Rolen later explained to me, at his home, in Mississippi, "It's clearly an intellectual war, a war of ideas, a cold war." Rolen, who broadcasts a show called "Radio Free Dixie" and publishes the newspaper *Confederate Underground* (billed as "pro-South, pro-secession, race conscious"), said that Westerman's killing had become "a lightning rod" because it was "an unnecessary sacrifice of an all-American kid trying to bring up a family and murdered by kids raised under the welfare state." The flag, he added, was a sort of talisman against the mainstream culture, "a symbol of common identity among Southerners in an age when so much of what we are comes from TV or Hollywood or Madison Avenue."



Westerman's aunt Brenda, who had become the family's point person for Rolen and the other rally organizers, was disturbed by some of the speeches that day, and was worried that Michael's memory was being used to air extremist views. She was also alarmed by the literature turning up in her mail. "Some of this stuff is just a little wild," she said when I visited her at her home, opening a trunk stuffed with flyers and newspapers from neo-Nazi and white-supremacist groups. They included a viciously xenophobic tabloid, *The Truth at Last*, which recently published an article condemning Senator Phil Gramm's marriage to an "Asiatic"—an article that the Gramm campaign alleged Buchanan backers had distributed just before the Louisiana caucuses. (The Buchanan campaign has denied distributing the article.)

Brenda slipped a video of the Flag Day rally into her VCR and listened to the speeches again. Midway through the tape, she began weeping. "I feel my grandchildren will see another civil war," she said. "Between black and white, not North and South. People just can't seem to get along."

THE trial of Westerman's assailants was originally scheduled for early summer. But Freddie Morrow's mother found that she could no longer pay the private lawyer she'd hired, and a public defender took over, delaying the case. A judge had acceded to a request by the prosecutors that the defendants be tried as adults, on a stiff list of charges: premeditated murder, felony murder, attempted aggravated kidnapping, and civil-rights intimidation.

Robertson County, Tennessee, where the shooting occurred, lacks a juvenile facility, so Morrow ended up in solitary confinement in a county jail—an overcrowded pen under court order to improve its poor facilities. The jail's only exercise space is a rooftop enclosed by a high fence topped with razor wire. When I first visited, a dozen inmates began rattling their rooftop cage and hollering as I made my way across the parking lot.

"Hey, snow! What's your name?"

"You coming to see Freddie?"

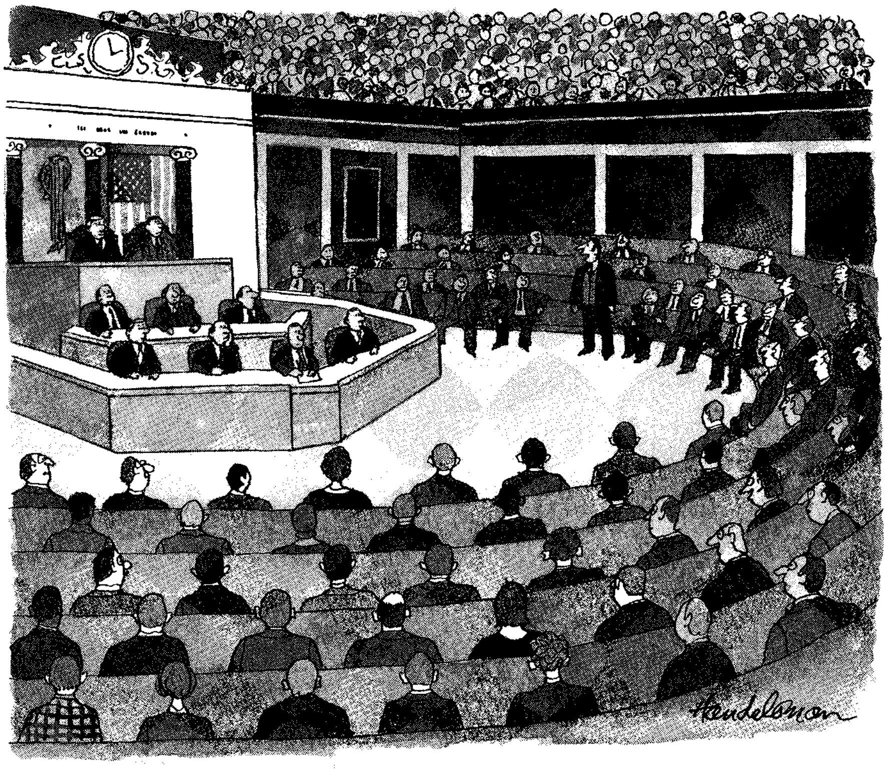
"They gonna fry that little dude?"

A guard escorted me to a converted cell that served as the prison library. Then he brought Morrow in. Clad in orange prison pants and a white T-shirt, Morrow stood a lanky five feet ten, and had a disarming, chip-toothed smile above a teen-ager's wispy goatee, which he fingered self-consciously. We sat knee to knee in the cramped cell and made small talk until I asked him what he was reading. He suddenly became animated, and talked about "Makes Me Wanna Holler," the best-selling memoir by the black journalist Nathan McCall, and Richard Wright's "Native Son," with whose protagonist, Bigger Thomas, Morrow said he identified.

When I asked why, he told me about his own troubled upbringing in Chicago. The story unspooled in a tangled rush of images: rough schools, reefer parties, Gangsters Disciples, a girl he may have got pregnant, arrests for gun possession and curfew violation. Coming to Guthrie was a relief after that, Morrow said. But he found it hard to shed his troubled youth up North. The way he told it, the Chicago street culture he'd escaped was exactly what young Southern blacks craved. "Being in gangs, that's the main thing they want—they want to be bad," he said. "They came to me and asked about gangs—gang colors, stealing cars, crazy stuff."

Morrow began acting out the role of street-savvy tough. His recounting of frequent brawls always followed the same pattern: Someone would provoke him, he'd walk away, then a taunt or internal prompt would lead, inevitably, to a fight. A fatalistic phrase kept recurring: "Go on ahead." As in, "He picked up a bottle and broke it and was talking about putting it in my back, and I was like 'Go on ahead, just go on ahead.' "

It was during one of Morrow's many suspensions from school that he shot Westerman. He said he had nightmares about that day, and as we talked about them he began to cry. "No matter what I do—ever since I turned myself in, I've been saying 'Sorry.' But that just ain't gonna do." One night after he'd spent several months in solitary, he tore up a sheet, intending to hang himself. "Something just kept telling me, 'Just go on ahead and do it, just go on ahead.' " But a prison guard and former preacher helped Morrow work through it. Now he was making plans for the future. He'd thought of writing about his life, he said, and taking up drawing again—a hobby he'd excelled at up North. He also fantasized about his release from jail, which he described as if it were imminent. "My main plan for when I get out is to be back in touch with my family, go to church every Sunday," he said. And he wanted to stay in Guthrie—nothing fancy, just settle down with his girl and go to work at an appliance factory. "I was thinking when I turn eighteen I can get on at State Stove with my cousin Jeff," he said.



"I'd like to propose a bill to the effect that we can remain freshmen indefinitely."

THE trial finally began on January 9th, in Springfield, the seat of Robertson County, almost on the anniversary of the shooting. About a hundred people crowded into the courthouse—a Victorian throwback, with glass globes dispensing gum for a penny, and with clouds of cigarette smoke hanging in the air.

In the courtroom, Westerman's family, wearing his picture pinned to their breasts, filled the front row. Behind them sat several members of the S.C.V. and a publisher of Southern books who during recesses peddled copies of an old Confederate apologia called "Facts the Historians Leave Out." Two Klansmen were allowed into the courtroom, in street clothes. Across the gallery sat a much smaller group of blacks. Conspicuous among them was Freddie Morrow's mother, Cynthia Batie, who had come from Chicago by Greyhound. Afflicted with a crippling neurological ailment, she rode into the courtroom in a motorized cart.

The defense had sought a change of venue, because of local publicity and Springfield's proximity to Guthrie. And, indeed, the jury pool proved so overwhelmingly white and pro-prosecution that the defense chose at the last moment to waive a jury trial. The judge, Robert Wedemeyer, moved the trial along quickly. It was over in three and a half days.

The trial hinged on intent—"a head case," as Morrow's lawyer put it. Prosecutors had two routes to a first-degree-murder conviction. One was to demonstrate that the shooting was deliberate and premeditated, and the other was to show that the killing occurred during

WHERE DID I LEAVE OFF?

Where did I leave off yesterday?
I stood at midnight with the mouse
caught in a cornflake box and rustling slightly.
What to do next? I stepped outside
into the back-door tangle of thorns and roses.
I did not know my neighbors.
They'd be puzzled to see a cereal box
in their back yard. "Good luck,
little mouse," I said, as the box sailed
over the high fence.

Our next mouse crept
into an empty cider jug for the sweet dreg.
I stood the bottle up, a sad, sweet jail.
Almost at once she gave birth to a litter of six.
I carried the bottle of mice to Lincoln Park
and left the jug on its side, for easy exit,
under a sheltering bush. They were all
Beatrix Potter mice, dainty and lovable;
not the gross travesties of Disney.
I was lonely
with my husband away all day at work.
But after a wild party Kentucky Derby Day,
we, too, began to breed, in Rapley Caves, under our thicket of pipes
but not in a cereal box or cider bottle.

In the first cyclone to hit the eastern mid-Atlantic coast,
we moved to New Haven in such a deluge
that canoes passed us on the Boston Post Road,
and, as we drove into New Haven,
all the elms blew down behind us.
I survived a surfeit of tainted oysters
and gave birth to our first child.
He will be 55 next week.

Why am I telling you all this?

—Virginia Hamilton Adair

an attempted kidnapping, which made it felony murder. If either charge was proved, the punishment was a mandatory life sentence. Another charge, civil-rights intimidation, was based on a new Tennessee law, designed to prevent harassment of blacks; its use in reference to a white and to the rebel flag was unprecedented.

From the start, the case displayed a central irony: the rebel flag that had been featured in so many media reports was conspicuous by its absence during most of the trial. The defense feared that dwelling on the flag and its potential as a provocative symbol—or even painting the tense racial atmosphere in Todd County, particularly on the weekend of the crime—would bolster the state's claim that the killing was premeditated and would also incriminate the defendants on the civil-rights charge. And, because the recent O. J. Simpson verdict had outraged many whites in rural Tennessee, the defense, anticipating a jury trial, had decided against emphasizing race.

But this decision had left the defense lawyers with an anemic explanation of what happened. In folksy opening statements, they likened the incident to their own schoolyard brawls in the nineteen-sixties. The only reason that this one had spiralled tragically out of control, they suggested, was that kids now wielded guns instead of fists, and one of them had taken a fluke shot. Later, their clients, on the stand, shrugged off Westerman's rebel flag—and even being called "nigger"—as commonplaces of the local landscape. It was left, oddly, to the prosecution to point out the flag's potential as a racist symbol.

The Simpson trial warped the case in another way as well, at least for the families. It had raised wild hopes among the defendants' relatives—and fears among Westerman's—that lawyers could exploit the local police work in the same way that Johnnie Cochran had shredded the Los Angeles Police Department's. The police did not do any ballistics tests on Westerman's gun. Nor had they performed gunshot-residue tests on his truck, on Damien Darden's car, or on any of the defendants. Moreover, the coroner who had signed Westerman's autopsy report was unavailable: he had since fled Tennessee amid allegations of incompetence and necrophilia.

But the defense attorneys—an overworked public defender, two court-appointed lawyers, who were paid forty dollars an hour, and a black attorney working pro bono—didn't have resources of the sort available to the Simpson dream team. And, to some degree, any holes in the investigation were moot. Unlike Simpson, the defendants had made incriminating statements to the police on the night of the shooting—before any of them had lawyers or knew that Westerman's wound was fatal. Also, the state had two potent witnesses: Hannah Westerman and one of the passengers in Darden's car—Tony Andrews, who turned state's evidence.

Andrews, a childhood neighbor and playmate of Westerman's, identified Darden as the instigator of the confrontation and Morrow as a willing triggerman, but he also said he saw someone in the truck reach out and shake the flag at Janie's Market just as Darden was breaking off plans to fight. This action, combined with Morrow's telling the others he'd heard someone shout "Nigger," appeared to reignite the teen-agers' desire to fight.

Andrews' testimony clearly upset the families in the gallery. During a break, Freddie Morrow's mother left the chamber to find Westerman's family standing just on the other side of the door. David Westerman seemed to block her path. And Hannah, arms crossed, fixed Cynthia Batie with a flinty-eyed scowl.

"What's your problem?" Batie snapped.

"Bitch," Hannah said.

"What did you say?"

"You heard me, bitch."

"I'm not a bitch."

Hannah's family pulled her away as Batie yelled, "The truth is going to come out! Then we'll see who the bitch is!" The two camps huddled, chain-smoking, and muttered about the incident, each giving vent to vicious stereotypes. In Cynthia Batie's mind, Hannah and the Westermans were bigoted rednecks, just as she imagined Westerman had been, and their friends were closet Klansmen. To the Westermans, Batie represented, in the words of Michael's mother, JoAnn, "the motormouth with a motor," an uppity city black who stirred things up, just the way her son had.

Inside the courtroom, Morrow took the stand. He said that he'd fired the gun because others had goaded him; even if that was true, it wasn't clear how the goading could diminish his guilt. Nor did he exhibit any of the emotion or remorse he had shown when I visited him in jail. Instead, numb with anxiety, he dully mumbled "Yessir" and "I don't know" as the state asked one incriminating question after another. Watching from the gallery, the county's chief deputy whispered to a man beside him, "He started in a ditch about six inches deep with a shovel. Now he's in with a backhoe digging himself as deep a grave as he can."

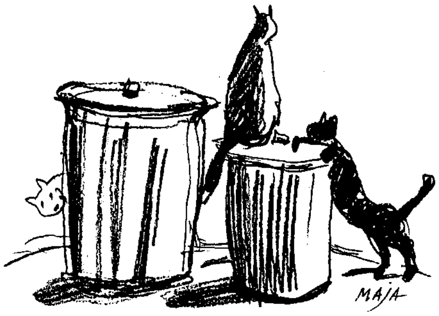
Still, the defense remained confident that the charges would be reduced to manslaughter or even lower. The flag seemed almost an afterthought. Darden's lawyer, Jerome Converse, felt that Hannah Westerman had effectively thrown away the charge of civil-rights intimidation by testifying that Westerman displayed the flag because "it matched his truck and it made it look sharp," rather than as an expression of any belief. "Aesthetics are not protected by the Constitution," Converse observed in closing arguments.

This speech prompted an emotional reply from one of the prosecutors, an owlish Northerner named Arthur Bieber, who rushed to the podium carrying several tomes. The key issue, he said, was not the intent of the person displaying the flag but "stereotypical assumptions" made by those who saw it. "If a person feels it is symbolic of keeping African-Americans back, then it's easy to believe that the people displaying it are bigots." Whites in the audience began to shift uncomfortably. "They'd get mad," Bieber continued. "They might want to drag them out and beat them up. A stereotypical assumption was made in this case, and that's why it happened."

Bieber opened William Shirer's "Rise and Fall of the Third Reich," and quoted Nazi laws about Jews as another example of "stereotypical assumptions" that led to violence. Then he turned to Carl Sandburg's biography of Abraham Lincoln. "I'll probably offend some people," he said of the Confederate Antichrist. He read the opening of the Gettysburg Address, lingering on the statement "All men are created equal." He cited the Lincoln quote, he told me later, because it buttressed the point that whites have the same right to fly the rebel flag that blacks have to wear "X" T-shirts.

While the Judge deliberated over the young men's fate, the families retreated to opposite ends of the hall, holding hands and praying. When court resumed, ninety minutes later, the chamber was filled with undercover police. There had been anonymous death threats against the Judge, and the cops were there also to prevent a post-decision brawl between what one lawyer called "bride side and groom side" in the court.

The Judge found Freddie Morrow guilty of attempted aggravated kidnapping, felony murder, and civil-rights intimidation. "By law," he said of the murder charge, "the court imposes sentence of imprisonment for life." Damien Darden received the same sentence. A third defendant, a sixteen-year-old, was found innocent.



The women in Westerman's family, except for Hannah, burst into tears. Hannah strode out of the courtroom and into a pack of TV cameramen. "I feel everyone should have got what the two got," she said. "They got what they deserved—well, they deserved to die." (Tennessee has no death penalty for juveniles.) But she wasn't altogether displeased. "It's about time someone who's white got to stand up and say, 'Our civil rights were violated.' "

A few hours later, at a tavern in Guthrie, I watched Hannah on the six-o'clock news. The barmaid raised a beer bottle in salute, and everyone at the bar cheered. At Janie's Market, nearby, trucks pulled in to buy gas, rebel flags flying. Banners also appeared in windows along the main street.

The next day, I found two teen-age girls smoking and shivering beside Westerman's grave. They said that Todd Central high school was calm but that a chilly distance now separated blacks and whites. "No one wants to talk—we go our separate ways," Kristina Gore said, flicking ash on the snow. "It's probably for the best."

Black teen-agers felt much the same, and a growing number had decided to escape Todd County by joining the Army at the earliest opportunity. Their parents often chose to shop in nearby Clarksville now, rather than buy from local merchants, around whom they felt awkward. Some blacks avoided going out in Guthrie or Elkton after dark.

At a service in Guthrie's black Baptist church two days after the decision, the tone was resigned. Members of all the defendants' families were there, cooling themselves with cardboard fans that bore pictures of Martin Luther King, Jr. The pastor spoke of the trial in the broad context of black suffering. "We have been *o*-pressed and *de*-pressed for over two hundred years," he said. "Ain't nothing change but the years."

Morrow's mother invited me across the street to her in-laws' house, a small bungalow with a plastic snowman in the yard. She studied a picture of Freddie at the age of two, hugging a Teddy bear, and wondered aloud how her youngest child—"a mama's boy," she affectionately recalled—could now be facing life in prison. Perhaps, she said, it was all her own fault, for losing her job when Freddie was a young teen-ager; after that, she had lost the house she'd been trying to buy, and had moved to a rough area she described as New Jack City. It was there that Freddie first got into trouble.

Or maybe it was the fault of adolescent hormones, she went on. "Boys got this thing, showing your manhood, that you're bad," she said. "It's a man thing." But she was also angry that racism and the rebel flag hadn't really been aired at the trial. "The flag and 'nigger'-calling—you can deny that it hurts you, but it builds up," she said. "You're going to burst one day. You keep putting it on people, it's going to blow up."

Ten minutes up the road, at the Westermans' house, in flat farm country north of Guthrie, fourteen rebel flags were on display to mark the anniversary of their son's death: one flew at half-mast from a tall flagpole; the others were draped across rocking chairs and porch furniture. Inside, Hannah sat in the den watching "Oprah" as the twins, Michael and Michaela, played on the floor. One wore a rebel-flag shirt bearing the words "American by Birth, Rebel by the Grace of God." The den, too, was cluttered with Confederate paraphernalia, mostly gifts from well-wishers across the South: stands with miniature flags; toy rebel soldiers; a picture of Jeff Davis; another of rebels in the field.

Westerman's mother joined us, and she echoed the students I'd spoken to at the grave site. "At Guthrie Garment, blacks I consider myself close to, deep down inside there's something in between us now," JoAnn Westerman said. "We leave that void there and don't discuss it." I asked if whites might reach across the void by refraining from displays of the rebel flag. "Back down?" she snapped. "Never back down to none of them."

I asked Hannah why, after hearing the court testimony, she thought Westerman's truck had been targeted. "Blacks don't like Western," she hypothesized, referring to Westerman's cowboy hat, which Tony Andrews said he'd spotted at Janie's. Or maybe they were just jealous. "It was a big ole mean-looking truck," she said proudly.

Bernard Schoenbaum

"I reside in New York, but my mind is based in L.A."

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The truck's flag now adorned Hannah's living-room wall. Another rebel flag, which had draped Westerman's coffin, had been installed in a framed exhibit at a museum owned by members of the Sons of Confederate Veterans in Franklin, Tennessee, where the South took more than six thousand casualties in an 1864 assault even bloodier than Pickett's Charge. The exhibit included a photograph of Westerman and said that the "Confederate Martyr" had "succumbed to his wound" after being "accosted by a carload of black youths who made racist remarks concerning this flag." It hung in the foyer of the museum, beside a print of Pat Cleburne, the most famous of six Southern generals killed at Franklin. The S.C.V. had also helped raise about forty-five thousand dollars for Westerman's trust fund, which was to be reserved for the twins until they turned eighteen.

Westerman's father had drifted in and out of the den without saying much, but as I got up to leave he offered to show me a home video. Images of Michael rolled across the TV screen: as a baby, as a seventh grader on the football team, at home making a science-fair telegraph with his father, at the senior prom with Hannah, and, finally, cradling one of his twins. As we watched, one of the babies toddled up to the screen and said, "Dada." Mr. Westerman's eyes misted over. A modest, soft-spoken man, he was, like Freddie Morrow's mother, still trying to make sense of what had happened to his son.

He opened a loose-leaf album his sister Brenda had given him for Christmas, a sort of family reliquary that included the program from their mother's funeral and pages of Westerman history. Mr. Westerman ran his finger along a list of Confederate ancestors: one captured, another shot dead at Gettysburg, and a private "killed in action, 24th May 1862." His age was listed as nineteen. "Just like Michael," he said. He wiped his eyes. "They say that war ended a long time ago. But around here it's like it's still going on." ♦

FACT AND FICTION

THE QUEEN'S TOUCH

How far is it worth travelling to have dinner with Her Majesty—and Prince Philip, of course (you can't forget Prince Philip)?

BY PAUL THEROUX

THE shortcut through Boston that night was a mistake. I could not drive fast enough to escape my feeling of failure. Winter tramps and homeless veterans lurking in these narrow back streets looked like Arctic explorers in old engravings—overdressed, shrouded in lumpy clothes, frostbitten and doomed. It was face-freezing weather, and the plowed streets were lined by barriers of dumped snow. The sidewalks glittered with crystals of black frost.

Failure is a sort of funeral, and a person fleeing a collapsed marriage is both corpse and mourner. The awfulness is palpable; you can feel it all over your body.

A croaky-voiced yokel on my car radio said, "If you don't care where you are, you're not lost," and I laughed angrily.

Arriving at midnight at my own house, on the Cape, I was not consoled. It was chilly inside, and the low temperature made the damp air greasy. I switched on the lights and turned the thermostat up. Just then I heard the ping of my answering machine. Two messages. After three days away only two messages, and the first one began, "You bastard, don't you dare." I hit the "Skip" button.

The second message was strangely formal. It was like hearing a different language. I could tell from its hesitation and twittering and the howling wires that it was probably transatlantic.

"This is a message for Paul Theroux from Mr. and Mrs. Laird Birdwood," it began—a female voice, deferential and secretarial. "They wonder whether you are free for dinner at their house in London on February 12th. A few details. Black tie. Arrival at seven-thirty sharp—the timing is rather important, I'm afraid. We'll fax an invitation when you've confirmed that you can make it. We very much hope you can. Please ring back when you have a chance."

It was a complete statement—precise, efficient, and clearly enunciated.

I listened to the message again, looking into my bedroom mirror. I was pale and unshaven, the tip of my nose was pink, a scab of snot clung to one nostril, my hair was twisted into spikes from my Arctic wool hat. I had not changed my clothes for three days.

Black tie. Arrival at seven-thirty sharp.

Dinner in London was out of the question. I would call tomorrow and convey my regrets.

I had a bath. I shaved. I drank green tea. I got into bed and read some pages of Malinowski's "Coral Gardens and Their Magic." Sleety rain had started to patter like sand grains against the window. I fantasized about disappearing in New Guinea—no lumpy clothes, no gloves, no frostbite. I warmed myself with my tea and my reading and was soon asleep.

In the morning, I called Birdwood's number. I got his secretary, the polite woman who had left the message.

"I am so sorry," she said. "I know Mr. and Mrs. Birdwood will be disappointed. They were very keen for you to come. Whatever is that noise?"

"The wind," I said. Last night's storm was still blowing, tearing at the shingles. "It's just that it's quite a trip from here to London for dinner."

"Quite. But it's going to be a special occasion."

"Oh, I'm sure."

"I think that you ought to know that the guest of honor is Her Majesty the Queen."

"Yes," I said. I couldn't make sense of the words. The Queen?

"And Prince Philip, of course. They've never visited Mr. Birdwood's home before. Everyone's very excited, as you might imagine."

"The Queen," I said. The word called up her portrait on the postage stamps, her slender neck, her dainty chin, her perky nose, her crown prettily tipped on the back of her head.

"For security reasons we have to have our final guest list fairly soon."

"I'll be coming alone," I said.

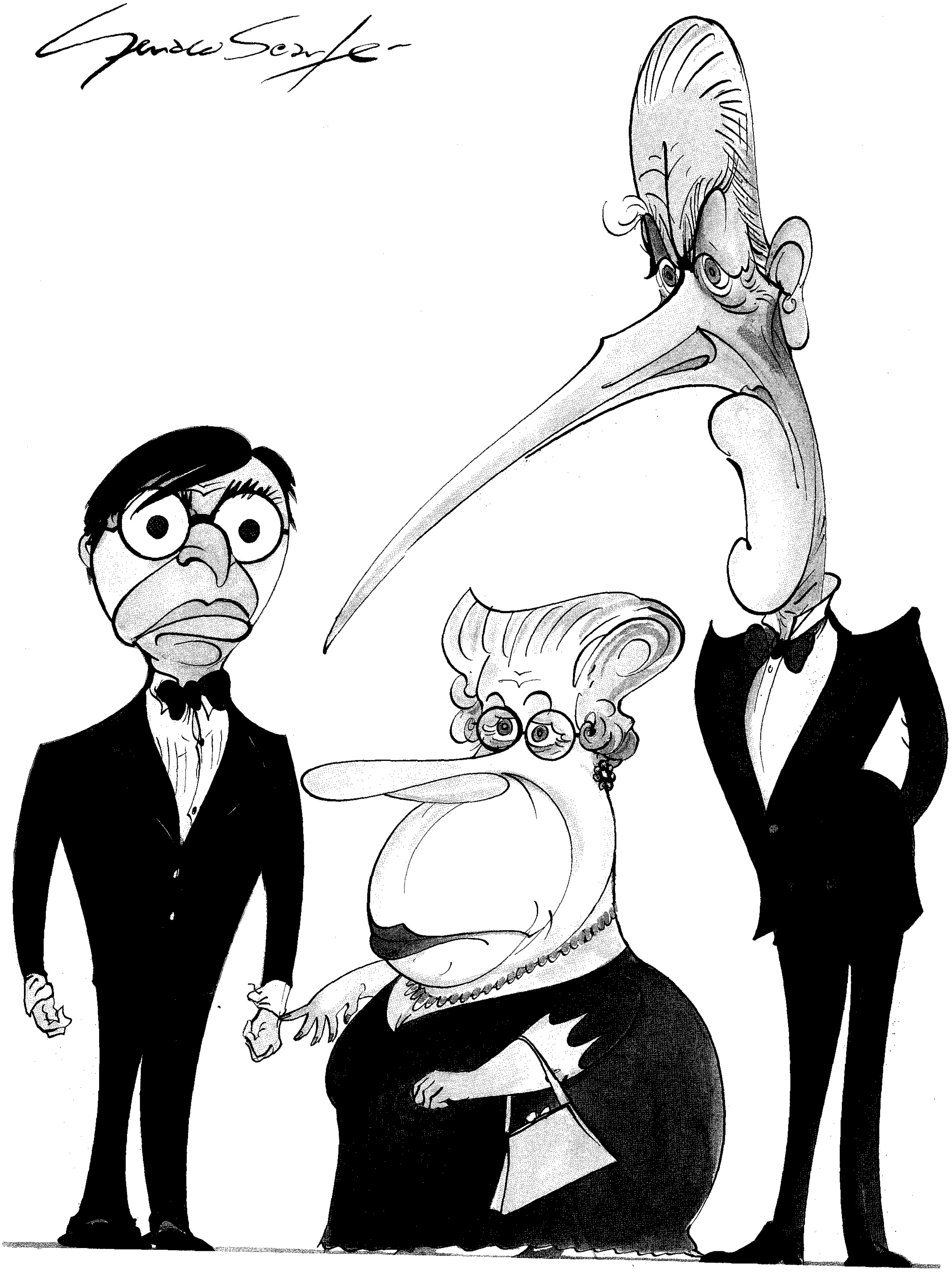
FLYING into London on my low-season frequent-flyer fare, my only luggage my tux in a bag, I reflected that what I needed was the solace of a place where no one knew me. Instead I was Mr. Half-a-Life, in a shabby uniform, setting off to meet Her Majesty, Elizabeth II, the Queen, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and of her other realms and territories, Head of the Commonwealth, Defender of the Faith.

I was in coach. Carl Lewis was in first. A bossy, buttocky flight attendant—male, wet-eyed, twitching to be noticed—blocked my way, allowing the Olympic runner off the plane. He had, I noticed, the smallest ears I had ever seen on a human being.

I had left London only two years before, but in the Underground I realized that there was no one I wished to see. The Birdwoods were not really friends; in fact they were almost strangers to me. Charmian was English, "the Queen's cousin," people said, as they said about many socialites, but perhaps this royal visit was proof. Laird was a wealthy American, a breeder of horses who needed to be near Newmarket. He prided himself on his stables (he had twice won the Grand National) and his library of first editions. Years before, during Royal As-

GERALD SCARFE

We all knew that we were privileged to be meeting the Queen. The idea was to remain upbeat.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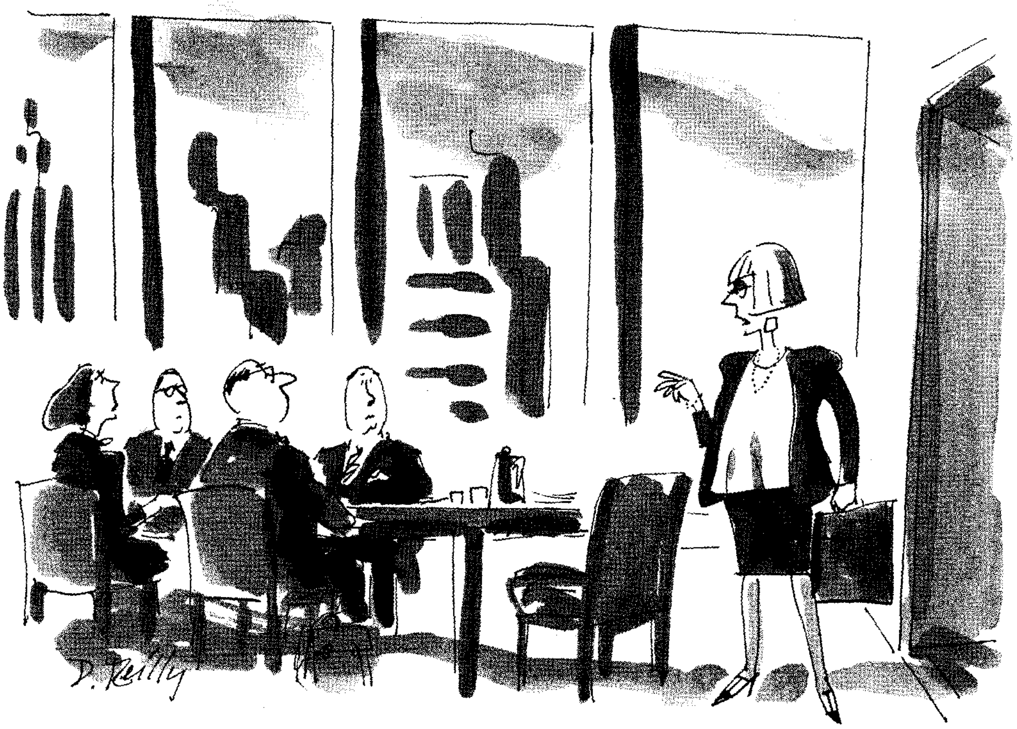


"I'm off now to reproduce—but I'll be back!"

• •

cot week, he had invited me to dinner with Princess Anne, and he had sat me next to her. "Daddy had a go at the *Daily Express*," the Princess Royal had said. After dinner, her husband, "the Captain," as she called him, had complained about her trips to Africa to visit hungry villagers. "What I say is charity begins at home." He had broken his leg in a riding accident. It had not stopped him from attempting a foolish little jig as he wearily kicked his plaster cast while the Princess Royal sighed and suffered. They were separated now.

I had been seated next to Princess Anne because I was American, the soul of gratitude and politeness; and I was harmless. Being socially unclassifiable helped solve the problem of a royal seating arrangement. A presentable American created no class conflict. It would be even better that the Birdwoods and I were strangers to one another.

I got off the Underground at Earl's Court and found a "Vacancy" sign in the window of the Sandringham House Hotel. Eight o'clock on a cold winter morning in London. An Indian in something like a teller's cage signed me in, took my money in advance, and welcomed me. A plastic nameplate gave his name as R. G. Pillai.

"Room 22," he said. "It is not ready."

"Do you have any that are ready?"

"Not available."

"I've just flown all night."

"Checkout time is noon."

Interrupting me in my protest, he said, "Take breakfast in lounge."

It was not a lounge, but a drafty room on the second floor, damp and dirty, with velvet drapes, tables too close together, and an electric heater in the fireplace. A red light flickered inside a plastic ornamental log.

The waiters were Indians in stained white jackets. Breakfast arrived, an empty jam jar with a greasy lid, a saucer of two butter pats, a toast rack (two slices), a sugar bowl, a milk jug, a teapot, a pot of hot water, a tea strainer and tea-strainer holder, a cup and saucer, two spoons, two forks, and a pair of tongs for sugar cubes. It filled the table like the clumsy old tools of a barber surgeon. The waiter apologized as he set this stuff out, and by the time he had finished, the tea had gone lukewarm and the toast was cold and damp.

I envied the people at the other tables, quiet couples, men and women together, reading the morning papers or silently communicating—sometimes smiling, the unspoken intimacy of marriage. The rattle-clink of silver and porcelain took the place of conversation. At last, I was led to my room by a wordless Indian, up a staircase, down a passageway. Every footfall squeezed a creak from the loose floorboards under the worn carpet. He slotted the latchkey into an old lock and pushed open the door into a narrow room. He gestured, but, like a prison guard, did not enter. I drew the drapes and lay in the semidarkness, and fell asleep.

I was awakened by a sudden shouting from the next room: "I don't want to hear any more of this!"

It was a woman's voice, shrill and almost hysterical.

A man said, "If you'd only let me explain." He was quiet, reasonable-sounding.

"I don't want that bitch in our marriage! You wouldn't have done it if you cared for me. And her, of all people!"

"She's not the problem. Don't you see, it reveals a deeper—"

"That's all bollocks! Go get your little whore. You'll be sorry. You'll see that it's the biggest mistake you've ever made."

The man murmured. It was not audible. The woman then cried out, "Don't touch me!"

"Pack it in," the man said—in a low, severe voice.

"Leave me alone, you bastard!"

I covered my ears and shut my eyes. There was a quality in the darkness which gave the room a terrible smell—of fur and flesh, and not feet but hooves. I dropped off, only to be wakened again—shouts, accusations, thumps—but finally fell asleep, and did not wake until the next morning, early, remembering that this was the day of my dinner with the Queen.

After breakfast, walking to the bus stop, I was almost run down. It was her again, the bony-faced woman I had always encountered in London traffic—lovely hair, neck scarf, sleeveless quilted Barbour jacket, a green Range Rover. Dressed for the country, impatient in the city, she did not glance at me, didn't have to.

She had been doing this to me for years. She was on the phone, the thing clapped to the side of her face, while she steered the vehicle with her other hand. She muttered under her breath, drove on, still talking on the car phone. She missed but managed to splash me.

I took a bus to the Kings Road, then walked down Beaufort Street to the river. I was heading for Clapham but halfway across Battersea Bridge I realized that I dare not return to the family house. There would be no one home, and I would stand outside on the sidewalk, staring at the bricks, my old windows. My London had been that house and my family; I'd had nothing else.

Out of curiosity, I went to my local, the Fishmonger's Arms. The licensing hours had changed, and pubs in London were now open all day. Cigarette smoke, a damp carpet, the gluey smell of spilled beer, the underwater honks of a spinning fruit machine.

It pleased me that I knew the barman's name—Dermot. He smiled at me.

"You've been scarce."

"Been away."

"Good trip?"

"Some hassles."

"Fuss is better than loneliness," Dermot said.

That was all, after my year's absence. It was an Irish pub, everyone was friendly, but it was no more than alcoholic bonhomie. He didn't know me well enough to ask me anything else. I ordered a half-pint of draft Guinness.

It was a drizzling day. I walked through Clapham Junction. I bought a pair of black socks and a black bow tie at Marks & Spencer, then went down to the river again, through the churchyard of St. Mary's in Battersea. Hunched over, bent against the bad weather, I spotted a bus at the Fulham Road and caught it back to Earl's Court and the Sandringham House. The day was ending early in a quickening dusk of slimy streets and wet roof slates shining in the glare of street lamps. The lamps had burned all day, less as illumination than as a reminder of the undefeated dark.

Passing through the hall again, I heard a new voice, a woman's: "I don't know why you love me. I'm awful."

I had preserved my dress shirt and tuxedo in a box bound with string. When I put on the shirt, I realized I had no cufflinks. I called downstairs.

"Executive offices."

"Mr. Pillai, I seem to have left my cufflinks at home. Do you have any I might borrow?"

"You looked in room?"

"No."

"If you don't see them in room, we don't have."

"Do you know what I mean by cufflinks?"

"No. Not knowing."

"Then why do you say you don't have any?"

"Not available," he said, and then hung up.

A female voice in the next room said, "I don't want to have this conversation. I don't want to see you. Do you understand? I want you out of my life."

She had to be on the phone.

"And yes, I want you to fail. I want you to be as miserable as I have been. I want you to know what it's like."

It was too late to buy any cufflinks. I managed to fasten my cuffs with paper clips from a drawer. That held them.

My tux, I could see in the foyer mirror, made me look seedier, not better. A woman walked past me, smiling. I suddenly had a feeling this was not going to work. I had flown from Boston to London to have dinner with the Queen.

But my hotel was awful. It was inhabited by angry and unhappy people. I was sick with jet lag. My shoes were wet from my walk. Dinner, I now knew, was not going to happen. There would be no Queen.

A taxi sped me to Chelsea Embankment. Then, just off Swan Walk, through the flap of the taxi's windshield wipers, I saw the flashing lights, the police cars, the policemen themselves.

Sliding the glass partition, the taxi-driver called back to me, "You sure this is the right address?"

"This is it."

"Flaming circus—what's this all about?"

"The Queen's coming to dinner."

"God bless her," he said.

FROM the first, it was like a séance, but of a very classy kind. There was a tremor of nervousness in the house. Everyone was shiny and dressed up and alert—a little too ready to respond, with no one quite listening to anything that was being said. I was greeted by a doorman, perhaps hired for the occasion; then Birdwood and his wife said their tense hellos. I was handed a card. Four circles represented the four tables. A red dot indicated my place. A mostly American gathering, it was first names and fixed smiles and bright, anxious eyes.

In a mirror in the reception room, I saw that I did not look the way I felt, and that I could pass for a guest. Apart from Laird Birdwood and Charmian, I recognized no one in the room. A man standing next to me smiled. I spoke to him. Deaf with anxiety, he did not hear me. Another man began talking as I approached him, possessed by an almost hysterical garrulity, a talking jag brought on by the suspense. I could imagine all these reactions in passengers in a jammed elevator—claustrophobia, insecurity, fear. No one mentioned the Queen.

I overheard Birdwood saying, "Actually very unexpected."

A woman replied, "Perhaps better not to speculate."

Were they talking about the royal visit? The drama of the moment was making for the most frenetic and banal chitchat. We were desperate to see a royal ectoplasm.

"I think the sun was trying to come out today," an English guest said. The English were the most talkative.

"We've been extraordinarily lucky this winter," said another.

"The going at Goodwood was uniquely horrible."

Drinks were brought around by flunkies who, less nervous and better-dressed than the guests, seemed slightly superior and almost mocking in the way they offered the wine.

A man with a cadaverous face and a tight collar was saying in a high, insincere voice, "Made an absolute pig of myself eating and drinking."

We all knew that we were privileged to be meeting the Queen in a private house and that it would be extreme bad manners to have any bad news. The idea was to remain upbeat. And so we stood under the chandeliers, the men in black, the women in pretty gowns, being upbeat. The time of the séance drew on, but we were helpless, all of us averting our eyes from the large door that was the entrance to the room: no one wanted to be caught peeking.

A guest was saying to me, "It's always that way, isn't it?," but I had no idea what he was talking about. He was facing in my direction, but looking elsewhere.

The room had gone very quiet.

I turned to see what the man was looking at and glimpsed a woman being introduced to a group of guests and I knew from her diamonds and the size of her head that she was the Queen.

"That reminds me, I must buy some stamps," I said.

It did not matter. No one heard anything that was said.

But she was not the portrait on the postage stamp; she was a small muffin-faced woman in a blue beaded gown of stiff gauze. She had a shy but warm smile, not the fixed grin of a politician. Diamonds were clamped to her hair in a tiara, and more diamonds were around her neck. On one wrist was a diamond bracelet and on the other a diamond-studded watch. They were dazzling stones, small in size but so many, and in such clusters, that they made you think of electric circuits. The Queen's wire-frame eyeglasses looked banal on the royal face. The room was hushed, as though no one dared speak while the Queen was present.

Behind her the Duke of Edinburgh straightened himself. The royal entrance was evidently about silences. She was Her Majesty, he was His Royal Highness. He was taller than I had expected—taller than me—and he nodded when he was introduced, keeping his hands behind his back. No hands were extended, none were shaken, no one was touched: a séance would progress like this, too. The royal creature had been conjured out of thin air. One would never be sure whether the ectoplasm was real or imagined.

I glanced again at my diagram of the dining room and my red dot. I tucked my cuffs up into my sleeves. I checked my shoes. But I felt absurd. I began to dislike Birdwood for believing in me, giving himself and me the illusion that I mattered. I was a deserter and a bad husband who had used his last frequent-flyer miles to get his hands on a glass of wine here in the royal presence. I had holes in my shoes and paper clips in my cuffs, and an aching heart. I had not done any work for seven months. I was staying in a hotel run by nasty negligent people, where antagonistic conversations came out of the walls. I dreamed of going to New Guinea, of parting some huge plumes of greenery, curtains of palm fronds, in a place where cockatoos screamed; or walking into the darkness of the jungle; or vanishing and taking my failure with me.

"And this is Paul Theroux, the writer."

I was at last the shallow person I had always feared I might become. And this was my ultimate failure—not obscurity but the paradox that I was known to the world and miserable.

"Very pleased to meet you, Your Majesty."

The Queen smiled; she seemed to murmur something. I realized that I had nothing to say to her. It did not matter. She was being led onward, still smiling. She had a lovely smile.

There were more in the royal party—the Earl and Countess of Airlie, and some others.

No drinks for the royals. They were greeted and introduced and they passed into the dining room, a slow procession of swishing gowns and mumbling men. I hid myself among the shufflers. I liked this, for here everyone in the room was humbled. At any dinner party people contended to be noticed, usually the worst people. But there were no upstarts here. We filed in like children, fearful of making a wrong move, obedient and deferential, showing such reverence that it seemed to generate heat and light.

I consulted my dining-room diagram again and saw that my dot put me at the Queen's table. She was being seated next to Laird Birdwood. There was another man on her right, and a woman on either side of me, six of us, including Her Majesty.

Our food was brought promptly; the first course (I identified it from the menu) was roulade of sea bass with champagne and caviar sauce.

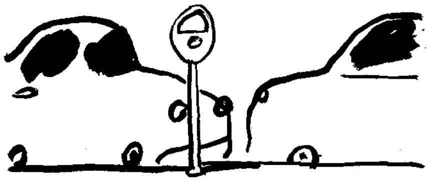
The woman on my right smiled at me.

"What are you working on?"

"Not much."

"Sounds super," she said. "I wish I could write."

She turned away. Laird Birdwood was talking to the Queen. What he said was inaudible, but at such close quarters it did not seem improper to stare at the Queen. In fact, this unembarrassed goggling could have passed for politeness. And after a while it seemed almost normal to be seated here—at the table with the Queen. She hardly ate, she hardly drank. It was a ceremony—a ritual talking, a ritual tasting. Standing, she had seemed the wrong shape and size; seated, she seemed slightly hemorrhoidal, but you could see that she was trustworthy.



"Quite," Her Majesty said.

Birdwood talked energetically. The subject was horses.

"Oh?" Her Majesty said.

Because she was so grand, not to say blessed with a hint of divinity, she gave the impression of foreignness—or of speaking a language that no one knew very well. Birdwood was doing his best to be understood.

"Yes," Her Majesty said.

It is said that everyone in Britain dreams of the Queen—another standard one, like being naked in a public place or flying over treetops by flapping your arms. In my Queen dream, which I had used in a novel, the Queen and I were alone in a palace room, on a royal sofa. She was the young thin-faced Queen whose profile appears on British stamps. "You seem dreadfully unhappy," Her Majesty said. Her face was pale (as it is on the stamp). I was in fact miserable but too shy to admit it. She was wearing a stiff dress of green brocade, revealing a deep cleavage. Her rings sparkled. Then, using both her hands, she pulled apart the bodice of her gown, and her breasts tumbled out and I put my head between them, her nipples cool against my ears.

"Isn't that better?" said the Queen in my dream.

I was sobbing between her breasts and could not reply.

"What are you working on at the moment?" the woman on my left asked.

I propped up the menu and read from it: " 'Fillet of lamb, lemon thyme sauce. Fresh garden vegetables. Broccoli timbale. Gratin of potatoes.' "

"Yes, I imagine so," Her Majesty was saying.

I could not suppress the devilish voices in my head, which were cackling and gossiping, reminding me of all the scandalous stories: that Prince Andrew had been fathered by one of the Queen's lovers—which was why Andrew looked different from the other children; that the Queen still had a lover; and that Prince Philip had had a succession of actress mistresses who regularly appeared on television, prompting viewers in the know to smile and say, "She's one of his."

Her Majesty was patting her lips with a small square of lace.

"Yes, it must be so pleasant," she said.

She was looking straight ahead—not at me, but into the middle distance. Laird Birdwood was still speaking in a gentle yet earnest way. The man to her right was attentive, yet he had not so far succeeded in saying anything. He smiled at me.

I smiled hopelessly back at him as dessert was served: chocolate mousse royal, with fresh raspberries. I read that, for this, our glasses were being filled with Schramsberg Blanc de Noirs.

We smiled, we ate, we sipped. This was not an occasion for conversation. The idea was to get through it and not be noticed. There were so many possible pitfalls that it was better to say little. At such a dinner, no one would ever be faulted for saying nothing, which would be better than being a bore or making a blunder. My crack about seeing the Queen as a reminder to buy postage stamps had been unwise. It was a good thing no one had heard me.

There was movement, the Queen was rising, and everyone in the room rose with her. Moments later, we gathered nervously in the drawing room, milling around, trying very hard not to think about Her Majesty seated on Laird Birdwood's toilet. I needed to think of that, to be reassured that she was human.

She returned, more relaxed and cheerier, breathing more deeply, as people do. I was talking to her lady-in-waiting, the Countess of Airlie, who had just asked me what I was working on at the moment.

"I was thinking of going to the Pacific," I said.

"Her Majesty had a most successful visit there a few years back. I was fortunate to be included. So many fascinating places. Most amusing in New Guinea." She had a bright smile and impish eyes. "She gave a speech, almost. Ha!"

I drifted over to the Queen's group. Her Majesty was listening intently; she had obviously perfected the art of seeming fascinated. She was formal, certainly, but more than that she was polite. Nothing improper, contentious, or untoward occurred in her presence. All was order and harmony. She was God the Mother.

But the strain of being Queen at such close quarters was beginning to show.

"Lifted his entire body," a man was saying haltingly, "but before he could clear the fence the band began to play and it spooked him and then—"

"Quite," Her Majesty said, with feeling.

"He wasn't seriously injured," the man said.

"That does happen," Her Majesty said. "Yes."

What was this, horses again?

"Your Majesty," I said. "I have been planning a trip to New Guinea. I understand you visited some years ago."

"Papua New Guinea," she said, giving the country its correct name. "Marvellous country. The Prime Minister visited the palace just last week. He had splendid hair. Fuzzy-wuzzy hair!"

There was a scream of laughter from us at hearing this description. We were eager to approve; it jarred the room.

"Yes," Her Majesty said, looking solemn yet knowing she had our complete attention. "There is no other way to describe it. And his wife. Didn't speak a word of English. Just sat next to him, smiling away, in her splendid gown. And she had fuzzy-wuzzy hair, too."

"This would be Rabbie Namaliu," a man said.

"Yes," Her Majesty said.

"The Scottish name is so reassuring," I said.

She shrugged. She said, "Perhaps there was some Scottish missionary in the picture."

Over the disbelieving laughter, I said, "But your speech—"

She glanced at me in a suddenly wintry way. Was it because in my haste I had left off "Your Majesty," the way a child might forget to say "Simon says" and be sent to the back of the line? But perhaps not. You did not converse, you did not give Her Majesty information, you did not hurry Her Majesty. My cuffs were showing.

"The state visit took us to the highlands," she said. "We drove to a clearing some distance from the town. And there were the people—several thousand of them. Some had walked for three or four days. They had feathers in their hair, and lovely costumes. They wore paint on their faces. They came in families. For my speech I stood on a platform."

She blinked at me, and went on, "I saw all the families. Mud family. Feather family. Shell family."

We smiled.

"But when I opened my mouth there was a great clap of thunder. At once, all

RIGHTS OF SPRING

N.Y. FLOWER SHOW
FLOWERS WEREN'T BORN IN VASES
STOP THE KILLING BUY PLASTIC
PLANTS HAVE FEELINGS, TOO!

the people ran under the trees. I had hardly said one word. The rain was next. I imagine they didn't want to spoil their feathers. They wore such lovely costumes, you see. There was no point in continuing. Somehow we got back to the car and that was when the hail came down. Hailstones so large they crashed against the windows—actually cracked the glass. It was amazing. We didn't get far. The car was a Rolls not made for those conditions and it quickly got stuck in the mud. The driver tried to move it, but it skidded and tilted onto its side. And there we were—couldn't go forward or back, with the hail smashing down."

"Weren't you absolutely terrified, Your Majesty?" a woman said with actressy passion.

"No, actually. But it was a bother."

She savored our reaction, while we waited for her to tell us what happened next.

"A man came toward us, soaking wet and smiling. He was wearing one of those funny Australian hats. He had obviously had a bit to drink. He leaned over and put his face against the window and looked in at me." She hesitated a moment, then pursed her lips, and, in a suddenly vulgar Australian accent, said loudly, " 'Hile to the Quoin!' "

The unexpected accent, the shock of it from Her Majesty in diamonds, caused another howl of pleasure.

"I could have strangled him," Her Majesty said.

I was thinking, Yes, God the Mother would look something like this—muffin-faced, crinkly, twinkling, small and dumpy, but also diamond-studded, bossy and appreciative and willing to please. She could not control everything.

I said, "Your Majesty seems to have visited most of the Pacific."

She did not reply directly, but I had succeeded in prompting her.

"There was a very bad hurricane in Samoa," she said.

"When you were there, Your Majesty?"

"No, yesterday!" she said with force. It was the nearest she had come to being impatient. She added, "Western Samoa has all the bad luck. Your chaps in American Samoa always miss those terrible storms."

"I want to go to the Pacific," I said.

Her Majesty said, "But you must go—"

I wanted more. But a voice in my ear—it was Birdwood, I knew—suddenly said, "No one's talking to Prince Philip."

Birdwood introduced me to the tall man with his hands behind his back, and then withdrew. The Prince did not ask me what I was working on. He did not say anything. His smile was that of a man who is not comfortable.

"The Queen was just telling us a story about her speech in New Guinea," I said. The Prince said nothing. "When it rained," I said. Still nothing. "And those hailstones," I said. " 'Hail to the Queen.' So amusing."

He looked unbelieving. With the deepest skepticism he said, "Do you really think so?"

"I imagine you were there," I said.

"Nowhere near it," he said.

"But you've been to New Guinea, Your Highness?"

He shrugged. "Of course."

"Fascinating place."

He shrugged again. This was a man who knew how to express boredom. In order to show me how utterly uninterested he was he worked his mouth, savoring, tasted something foul, pulled a face, then made an effort of swallowing.

He said, with a show of reluctance, "First time. I was in a village. Young girls got up to dance. Bare-breasted, of course—all smiles. Splendid. Next time—went back. Same village. And they all had these ridiculous ruffles and silly dresses. Appalling."

"You didn't approve, Your Highness?"

"It's a hot country!" he said. "Missionaries covered them up."

A sound came out of his mouth, a mirthless barking laugh. Then nothing.

He stood, looking away from me, and so I never got his gaze but only his profile—and that nose.

"I was thinking of going there, Your Highness."

"Well, what's stopping you?"

"It seems far."

He said, disbelieving again, "You think so?"

"Something like ten thousand miles away."

"Don't be silly," he muttered, still giving me his profile.

I wanted to twist his nose.

"You think I should go then?"

"Why in heaven would you want to go all that way?"

His relentless negativity baffled me. I could not say anything without raising an objection or a rude reply.

"Where do you suggest I go, Your Highness?"

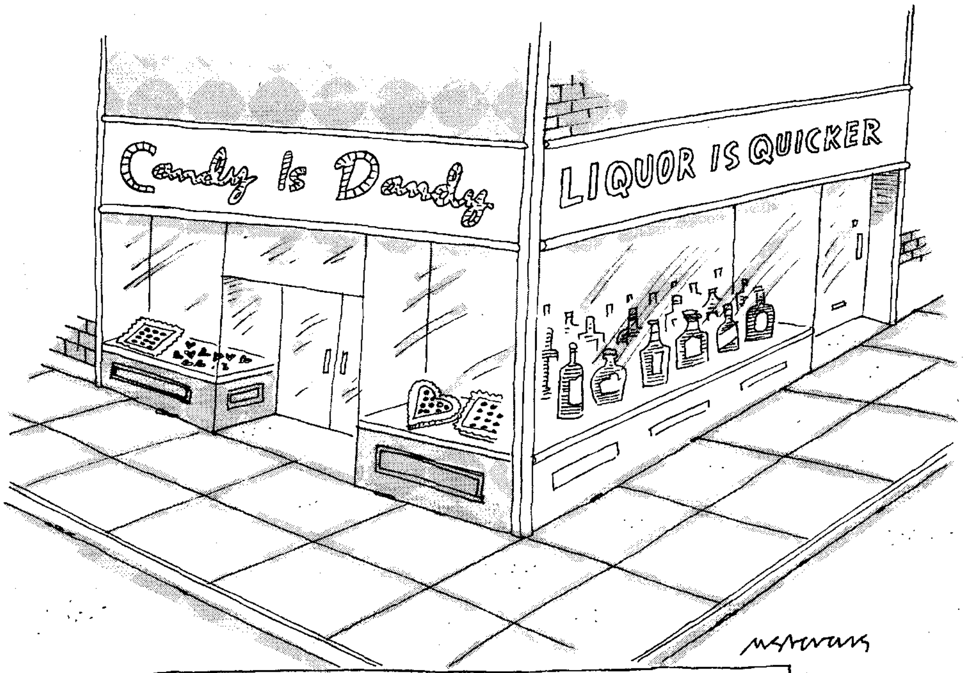
"How should I know?"

"I was just asking, Sir. I thought you might be a wealth of information."

"You did, did you?"

He frowned. It was clear to me why no one had been talking to him.

"I've got one of these computers," he said. "I generally ask my computer questions like that."



THE CORNER OF OGDEN AND NASH

"Does that work?"

"Of course not. They're useless."

"I've never used a computer."

"So you don't have the slightest idea, do you?"

Saying this, he turned away entirely and seemed to semaphore with his nose across the room.

The Prince's height helped him—his signal was seen by Laird Birdwood, who approached and began effusively to thank the Prince for coming. The Prince only smiled in that disbelieving way of his. I stepped aside and, eager to flee, slipped into the next room, and came face to face with the Queen. She was adjusting her dress. She looked up at me, surprised in her plucking, then raised her chin in the postage-stamp pose, and seemed to remember me.

"You're in a frightful muddle, aren't you?" she said.

"Yes," I said. What use was there in denying it? She obviously knew.

She stepped closer to me, and I suddenly felt trembly.

"You will get nowhere if you simply moon around, feeling sorry for yourself." She tilted her head to scowl at me and her defiant bosom swelled against the stiff gauze of her beaded dress, offering me a wink of cleavage. "What you want, young man, is purpose."

"Yes, Mum," I said, catching my breath. I was recklessly on the point of touching her.

"What is happening to you happens to many people," she said. "Don't think you're special just because of your muddle."

I could not look her in the face.

"You're in books, aren't you?"

"Yes, Mum."

"Go back to books, then."

Moving her hand to where mine trembled clawlike near her dress, she touched me, no more than that, and something like a bee sting made me splay my fingers involuntarily.

"Yes, Mum."

Then the door swung open, the Prince's hand on the knob. He was followed by the Earl and Countess of Airlie, and behind them the Birdwoods.

"Oh, Lord," the Prince said.

"I was just saying goodbye," I said.

"He's in books," Her Majesty said.

"Good night, Your Majesty," I said. "Good night, Your Highness."

The Prince smiled his dreadful smile. "You're in the way!"

Passing me, the Queen said, "Don't put it off"—*orf*—"you must see the Pacific."

I promised I would. To myself I said, "Keep this promise."

"You might never come back," Her Majesty said.

Then, as though a valve had been twisted in the ceiling, the air pressure in the room began to diminish, finally returning to normal, as side by side the royal couple became a procession of two. Little Mrs. God and her tall consort. They seemed a bit foolish and vulnerable walking away, their backs to me. They were very powerful and yet brittle; if you were not gentle with them they might shatter, like antiques. I liked her and felt superior to him.

There were no other goodbyes. The Birdwoods thanked me for coming. I went out and looked for a bus, but the drizzle defeated me again. I hailed a taxi to Earl's Court and the Sandringham, where every door seemed to have a complaint. Inside my room the walls were speaking.

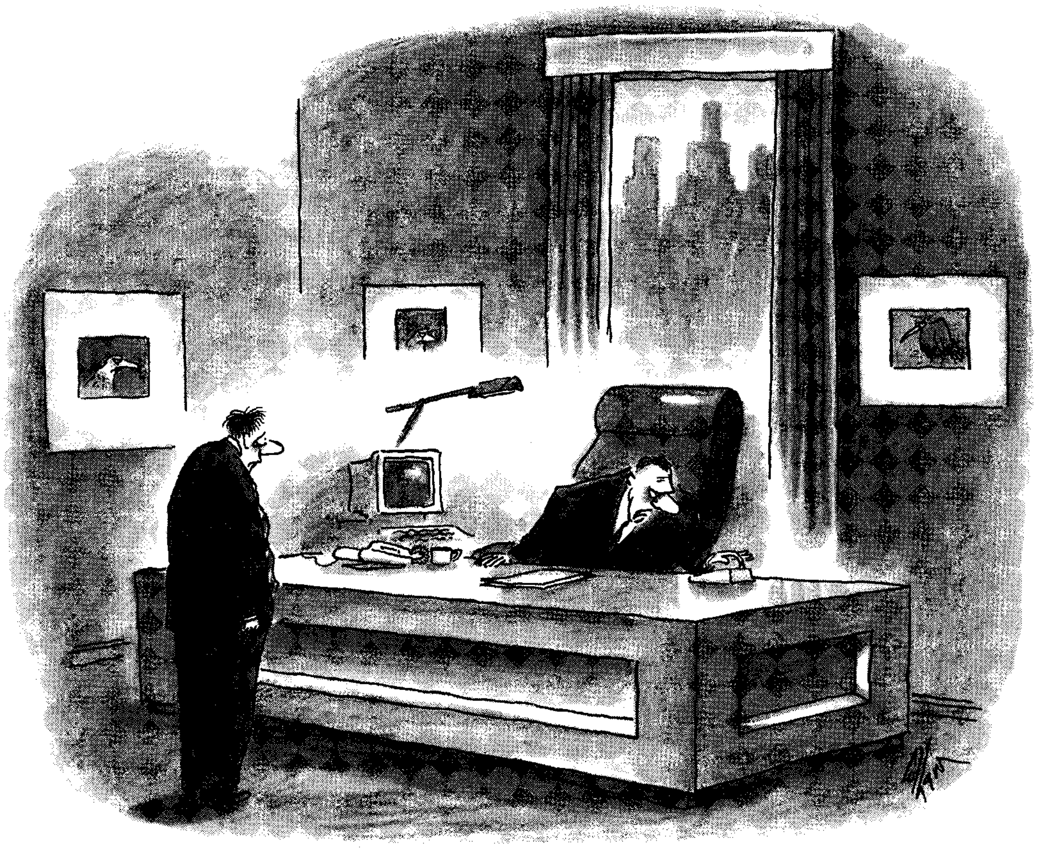
"But don't you see? It's too late. I don't want you back now."

Lying in bed, I heard a familiar voice. It was the woman on the telephone.

"You bastard, don't you ever call me again."

She hung up. There was a chuckle of laughter—a man. So she had someone with her. She was confident, but I could tell from the murmurs that she was uneasy with this man.

The walls were soon silent. There was a finality in the silence. I left the next morning, hurrying to the airport. And there remained a warm spot where the Queen had put her hand on my pen-holding fingers. It was the cauterizing pinch of a recent bee sting. It did not hurt, but it was tender, like a healed wound. It was as though she had made my fingers sentient and given them a memory—as though flesh could not forget. ♦



"Please hold my calls and disregard any cries for help."

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PROFILE

THE NEGOTIATOR

Can one woman persuade Beijing to comply with international trade law, fend off Pat Buchanan's attacks, and keep peace in her own home?

BY ELSA WALSH

LATE last March, at a restaurant close to the White House, Charlene Barshefsky, the Deputy United States Trade Representative, was having lunch with one of her oldest friends. Barshefsky had just returned from Beijing, where, it seemed, she had accomplished something extraordinary: after twenty months of often contentious negotiations, it appeared that she had persuaded the Chinese government to crack down on the piracy of United States movies, compact disks, and computer software—America's hottest and most important exports. Barshefsky's success had been noted on the front pages of the New York *Times* and the Washington *Post*, among the most desired imprimaturs in official Washington. The stakes for her talks had been cast in historic terms. "It's about what could be one of the most important questions of U.S. foreign policy in the 21st century: What if China can't go straight?" Thomas L. Friedman, the *Times* foreign-affairs columnist, wrote. Barshefsky, as the lead negotiator, had found herself at the center of American efforts to encourage China to transform itself into a society based on the rule of law.

At the restaurant, a procession approached Barshefsky's table to offer congratulations. At five feet five and a hundred and five pounds, Barshefsky is rail thin; like the subject of a Modigliani painting, she has an elongated, angular face, framed by dark brown hair cut close to her head. She accepted the congratulations with a large smile and self-deprecating humor. Her friend Joan Liebermann, a former roommate at the University of Wisconsin, watched and listened.

President Clinton had been introducing Barshefsky as "our toughest trade negotiator"; and trade—which Clinton had repeatedly declared to be critical to economic growth—was one of the few areas where the Administration then appeared to be doing exceptionally well. Barshefsky was regularly given credit by industry leaders for elevating trade to the level of a national-security issue. Liebermann, a psychiatrist, could see that Barshefsky enjoyed her public role, a reward that had been missing from her previous job, as the co-chair of the international division of a major Washington law firm. But Barshefsky, who is forty-five, is also the mother of two daughters, twelve and seven. She had been on the road almost every month for the last two years; roughly fifteen of her trips had been to Asia and had lasted an average of a week to ten days. When she wasn't travelling, she was likely to be at her office in the Winder Building, half a block from the White House. She tried to get home around seven-thirty, but sometimes she was at the office all night.

Her family was becoming less tolerant of her absences. When her husband, Edward Cohen, turned forty-five, her friends made most of the arrangements for his surprise party, because she was not scheduled to return home until late the night before his birthday. Barshefsky had not needed to tell Liebermann that she constantly felt exhausted, never quite over her jet lag, and she seemed to be forever struggling with laryngitis. Moreover, her father had just died. She'd recently decided to cut back on her Asian travel by shifting the Japan portion of her portfolio to someone else.

"I think it's rare one has a chance to see both sides," Liebermann said, recalling the lunch. "I was painfully aware of the experience of my friend. At the same time, I was thrilled for her. I was thrilled she could make such a contribution."

"I'VE always known I would work, so I never posed the question to myself in its most irreconcilable form: Should I work or should I stay home?" Charlene Barshefsky said to me in one of about a dozen recent interviews. "I posed the question to myself: Can I work and can I also have a family and be the kind of wife I would want to be, which is to say attentive to my husband and a genuine partner, and not a stranger?"

Cohen, a slight, bespectacled man with a wry sense of humor, is the Deputy Solicitor at the Department of the Interior. Family photographs are displayed in his office, and a baby's car seat stands conspicuously in one corner. "The dilemma in this job is that her kids will only be this age once," he said to me. "And yet she has this professional opportunity only once. And can you say no to either of them? The answer is very difficult. She's chosen not to, and I think appropriately. But the cost of that is being constantly torn. It is an overriding emotion that she lives with."

Barshefsky plans to return to China within the next two to three weeks to discuss U.S. complaints about enforcement of the intellectual-property-rights agreement. This time, however, her trip will occur in a charged political environment, with the Republican Presidential candidate Patrick J. Buchanan making an issue of American trade policies and blaming the Administration for lower wages and the loss of American jobs.

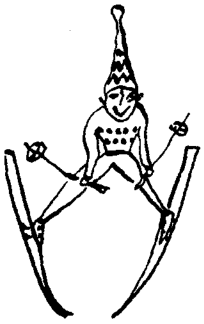
Barshefsky doesn't put much stock in the logic of Buchanan's arguments; ex-

Opposite: Deputy United States Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky sometimes works all night in her Washington office. Photograph by Annie Leibovitz.

ports to China have doubled since 1993, according to the trade office, and more than a million new jobs have been created as a result of increased exports to China and other countries. And Barshefsky believes that agreements like the one on intellectual-property rights not only protect American jobs and industries but guarantee United States access to a potentially huge market that otherwise would not exist. At the time the agreement was signed, on February 26, 1995, illegal copying of American copyrighted works—books, movies, CDs, videos, computer software—had been so pervasive that virtually no legitimate American products of the kind existed in China, and the export of Chinese pirated goods was costing American businesses close to a billion dollars a year in lost revenues.

"These are our potential markets. These are the fastest-growing markets in the world. These are the markets to which we're going to have to be able to sell to remain competitive. If our goods are pirated, if our trademarks are stolen, if our patents are violated, to whom do we sell?" Barshefsky said to me last week.

Though Barshefsky and the Clinton Administration have not been afraid to threaten sanctions, Barshefsky believes that the kind of over-all tariff on Chinese goods that Buchanan favors would do serious economic damage to the United States. Barshefsky is quick to distinguish "indiscriminate trade action from targeted action that can be effectively used to address particular problems." And in the last several weeks her boss, U.S. Trade Representative Mickey Kantor, has warned China that the United States may impose sanctions on more than a billion dollars' worth of Chinese goods, because although the agreement created a new enforcement structure to stop the piracy, implementation has been poor in the major areas. Chinese officials have tried to prevent small-time retailers from selling pirated goods within China, but American officials have received reports that piracy in some areas has worsened since the agreement was signed. United States industries have estimated that they lost $2.2 billion last year because of piracy, more than double the amount lost in 1994.



"The problem in China is massive," Barshefsky said.

In early November, I travelled with Barshefsky to China. Mickey Kantor had told me mournfully at a Washington dinner party that trade is routinely a front-page story in every country but the United States. Then he mentioned that one of the best trade negotiators in the world is a woman, his principal deputy, as are two of the other top negotiators: Wu Yi, China's foreign-trade minister, who was formerly the vice-mayor of Beijing, and Rafidah Aziz, the highest-ranking woman in the Malaysian government. They are known in the Asian world, he said, as the Three Iron Ladies.

Kantor was right in saying that trade problems do not often make the front page, but that has changed—in part because of the 1996 Presidential campaign. And Barshefsky, who has the rank of ambassador, is accustomed to making news. It was she who came up with the idea last summer of slapping a one-hundred-per-cent tariff on certain Japanese luxury cars when the Japanese refused to budge after twenty months of negotiations. The idea was viewed by many analysts as brilliant, for it would inflict the maximum amount of punishment on the Japanese and the minimum on the average American consumer.

During my time with Barshefsky, she did not conduct any formal negotiations: that is reserved for the final stages of an agreement. Instead of all-night table-pounding sessions, she had many long, unglamorous meetings with government officials. Barshefsky views the intellectual-property-rights agreement as a test of China's willingness to protect not only films and computer software but also aerospace and automobile technology. The economic future of the United States depends in large part upon the ideas market, and Barshefsky was particularly concerned that the Chinese had not dealt with the heart of the problem and the focus of the agreement: twenty-nine factories that had been primarily responsible for churning out between forty and forty-five million CDs, laser disks, and CD-ROMs. The Chinese initially denied the existence of the factories, but after Barshefsky and her team provided the factories' names, addresses, phone numbers, and fax numbers, they promised to clean them up or close them down. Seven of the factories were closed hurriedly, including one during the final hours of negotiations, but all except one had reopened by the time of the November trip. It is a prickly problem. Reliable reports tie ownership of or involvement in many of the suspect factories to the central government, to local governments, and to the Chinese military, which, like many government agencies, earns enormous sums from business ventures. "The economy is riddled with barriers and with corruption," Barshefsky told me. What she wanted to achieve on this trip was "a critical mass of paranoia": to persuade the Chinese that something very bad would happen—something like sanctions—if they did not act quickly.

Enforcement of the agreement was the most visible purpose of the trip, but Barshefsky's agenda was much broader. The United States already buys nearly forty per cent of China's exports, and is estimated to have spent forty-six billion dollars on them in 1995. That's more than four times as much as China buys from the United States, and America's trade deficit with China is growing at the rate of about twenty-two per cent a year. Some economists are predicting that the trade deficit with China will surpass that with Japan by the year 2000.

Barshefsky regards herself as a big-picture negotiator. Trade, she said, can accomplish more than mercantilist aims. "You want a strategy in the post-Cold War era where you utilize trade agreements as an organizing device for our international relationships—as an organizing device among countries," she told me. "It takes the place of the Cold War alliances, which were based largely on fear or a grudging acceptance of foreign aid. Today, trade is necessary not only to insure our domestic growth but also to insure that these alliances become vehicles for the spread of democracy and American values." She continued, "What this trip is about is a message from the United States that we want a significant alteration in your regime."

We had set out from Washington at seven-thirty on a Monday morning; Barshefsky wore her typical flight outfit: a white sweater, a multicolored scarf, black-and-white checked pants, and silver bracelets. By the time we reached the China World Hotel, one of Beijing's new five-star hotels catering to foreigners, nearly twenty-six hours had passed. Although Barshefsky wanted to sleep, she had an enormous amount of material to review before her meeting the next day at the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Coöperation, and she had told her staff to be in her suite in fifteen minutes. Five staff members had accompanied her to Beijing, four of whom had travelled there over the weekend to prepare. Barshefsky tries to limit her weekends away from home; weekends, her husband has told her, are the worst time for her to be away. On this trip, she would be gone two weekends, because she also had work in Hong Kong and in Osaka, Japan.

Her first meeting at the trade ministry consisted of setting the stage for future discussions. China's trade minister, Wu Yi—one of the Iron Ladies—would not be there and had not confirmed whether she would be available anytime during this trip. Wu Yi is a tough fighter: the first time she and Barshefsky met, two years earlier, Wu commanded her to "sit," and Barshefsky, startled, promptly obeyed. Barshefsky had gone through this routine before, sitting in her hotel room for hours waiting for appointments. Making someone feel uncertain and isolated is a common Chinese strategy, like isolating the opponent in the Asian board game Go. The Chinese don't like to see people from the United States Trade Representative's office, because it usually means trouble—and seeing Barshefsky usually means big trouble. They prefer the Commerce Department people, who they believe are more flexible.

The Chinese make this an endurance contest. And patience, a discipline that Kantor stresses, is one of Barshefsky's strengths. She does not tire easily and she does not give up. She told me that she always follows the same fundamental rules: define the long-term goal and the immediate objective; be constant; and do not lose sight of the consequences. "It's so easy to lose focus," she said. "You get involved in the intricacies. You get involved in the minutiae. Should there be a comma here? Should the word be this or that? You have to remember what you're trying to accomplish, and that takes constancy and it takes tremendous concentration."

"I'm the victim of negative advertising."

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On this trip, she knew that the Chinese, particularly the trade ministry, wanted to talk about membership in the new World Trade Organization, which is supposed to set and enforce the rules for global trade. The W.T.O. offers major trade advantages to its members: tariffs are reduced by an average of a third, and some economists have predicted that membership could boost China's exports by thirty-five per cent. But Barshefsky wanted to focus first on other matters—in particular, enforcement of the intellectual-property-rights agreement.

"I want to be very, very sharp about what we want them to do and in what time frame," Barshefsky told her staff. They had assembled in Suite 1407, the same suite she was given on her last visit, which suggested that their discussions were being monitored by Chinese intelligence. A Chinese guard with a walkie-talkie was outside the door at all times.

On the flight over, I had watched Barshefsky, who is ambidextrous, poring over thick black briefing books, switching from left hand to right as she highlighted and edited. She has a rare ability to talk in seamless paragraphs, and over the next half hour—and in a similar early-morning meeting—she went through her presentation as if she were reading from an outline. "I am going to tell them we need to see a continuous stream of activities," she said at the staff meeting. There were dates coming up—benchmarks of a sort—that she was going to list for the Chinese, including Congress's annual review of China's Most Favored Nation status. Critics argue for its revocation because of China's poor human-rights record. The Chinese bristle, but Barshefsky nevertheless raises human-rights concerns whenever she speaks with Chinese officials. China's explicit warnings and threats to Taiwan also haven't helped relations.

"I am going to tell them they are several months behind on enforcement," she said later, "and that they have to catch up, because if they don't politics will take care of this—real politics. They have a small window of opportunity in which to act. That's the critical message."

Kantor had asked her to focus on the upcoming Presidential election and what it might mean for China. She was planning to point out that there were seventy-three Republican freshmen in the House of Representatives, many of whom had expressed isolationist sentiments—views that were later echoed by Pat Buchanan. Barshefsky was carrying a nine-page paper—"a road map," she called it—outlining the steps the Chinese would need to take in order to meet the requirements of World Trade Organization membership. "I want them to understand two things," she said. "First, we would like them in the W.T.O., but, second, the price is not cheap."

After a quick review of the remaining items on the agenda, the group disbanded for the evening. Barshefsky would have liked to call her family, but she rarely calls from Asia at night, because it's early morning in America. "It was too disruptive," she told me. "Ed was finding that the kids were going off to school a little sad." She would do it the next morning, as she did every morning while she was away, and speak to her husband and two children for ten minutes or so. She had brought along two pages of Hebrew, which her older daughter was studying for her Bat Mitzvah. Barshefsky, whose father had been within a year of becoming a rabbi before he dropped out, had been reviewing a few lines each night with her daughter, and she was afraid her daughter would get behind while she was away if they did not continue. "I want to get through eight or ten more lines with her by the time I get home," she said.

NOW YOU NEED ME

When the rains come
you remember
our old closeness
humping along
in the wet.
You grope the dark
where I hang
morosely
by my crooked neck.
You pull off my cover
shake me till my
ribs jiggle
and a moth flies out.

Your hand reaches under
my black skirt
and up one leg
thin as a cane
until I open wide
with a rusty squawk
hovering above you
like a dark and loving
raven, said the old
umbrella, her night
full of holes.

—VIRGINIA HAMILTON ADAIR

BARSHEFSKY is the youngest daughter of Russian and Polish immigrants who arrived in America as adolescents unable to speak English. Education was highly prized by both families; her father, after his rabbinical training, became a chemical engineer in Chicago, and her mother was a substitute schoolteacher. Barshefsky's maternal grandmother, who lived with the family, told her that "a woman has to know how to take care of herself," and responded with encouragement when Barshefsky announced her plans to attend law school. Both her parents were dismayed, viewing law as a trade and not an intellectual pursuit. They had expected her to study for an advanced degree in an academic field, as her older brother and sister had done. But Barshefsky knew too many graduate students with no job prospects. Besides, Ed Cohen, her longtime boyfriend, was a law student, at Georgetown University. Barshefsky enrolled in Catholic University's law school, in Washington, and in 1975 graduated seventh in her class. The ranking helped land her a job at Steptoe & Johnson, one of Washington's most influential law firms.

Trade was an emerging area then, and it was one of the few practices not dominated by older men. Barshefsky rose in the field quickly, and by 1993 she had been co-chair of the firm's international division for three years, earning about five hundred thousand dollars a year. She was comfortable in her position and wasn't looking for a post in government when Mickey Kantor, the newly appointed United States Trade Representative, offered her a job as the deputy in charge of trade with Asia and Latin America. Kantor wanted a quick decision.

She had never been a professional negotiator or held a policy job, and had never operated in a political environment. On the other hand, in eighteen years of law practice she had proved that she could master new subjects at short notice. She had little anxiety about never having worked in Asia. Nor was she troubled by the salary, which, at about a hundred and twenty-three thousand dollars, would be less than a quarter of what she had been earning at Steptoe & Johnson.

"I was basically paralyzed," Barshefsky told me one Saturday afternoon in December, sitting in the newly renovated family room of her home in Northwest Washington, a large brick house with a wooded garden. On the mantel were several colorful decorations crocheted by her daughters. "One of the things that I needed to think about was whether at this juncture acceleration was advisable—whether it was something that I would look back on as having been the right decision or whether it was something I would look back on as having been a dreadful mistake in terms of the family and the children."

She knew that deputies at the trade office travelled all the time. Her travel was going to take her halfway around the world. She felt she finally had her routine of managing her family and her work down pat. She was the room mother to both her daughters' classes and assisted the art teacher in the older one's class during her lunch hour one day every other week. "The notion then of throwing the routine aside and plunging into something new was very threatening to me," she said.

Her husband urged her to take the job. He had worked in the Carter White House and on a United States Senate committee. He'd grown up in Silver Spring, Maryland, a Washington suburb, in a family passionate about politics. At the time, he, too, was in a private law practice, but he felt that everyone should do a stint in government. "Ed's view was the infamous George Bush 'been there, done that.' 'You've done what you've done as a lawyer, and why not try something different?' " she recalled his saying.

They shared an analytical way of thinking about their future. Before the birth of their first daughter, Mari, they decided that the children should not unduly bear the burden of their parents' professional lives. That meant that the two of them would never be out of town at the same time on business and that one of them would be home every evening except Saturday, generally the only night they would hire a babysitter. They still had the nanny who had been with them since Mari was born, but they tried to insure that she had her evenings to herself.

Even though her husband agreed that it would have been better if she had received the offer when the kids were older, he was willing to pick up the slack when necessary. After all, the job wasn't for a lifetime. "You know the family will make do with it," she recalled his saying. "We'll figure it out as we go along." Still, she hesitated, asking Kantor for more time to consider the offer. She also knew that, much as her husband was excited for her, the offer had evoked a bittersweet reaction: Ed had been the one who raised money for the Clinton campaign and worked on the issues staff.

She discussed the offer with her friend Joan Liebermann. Liebermann knew that Barshefsky was already making more money than her husband. The new job, with so much public recognition, could lead to tension. "The question one had to ask was, How much can the marriage take? And how much can the kids take?" Mari was then nine years old, and Devra was four.

At first, the children expressed reservations about the travel. But then, according to Barshefsky, Mari said, "Well, you know, there really isn't a downside, because if you like it then you like it, and if you don't like it you can always go back to being a lawyer." As for Devra, Barshefsky says, "She asked if I would ever get to meet the President. And I said, 'Well, I don't know. Maybe, but we can't count on that.' And she said, 'If there's any chance you can meet the President, you should do it.' " Barshefsky accepted the job in early February, 1993.

The first sign that this was not going to be an ordinary job came quickly. In late June, Barshefsky had returned from several gruelling days in Japan, where she and a number of other members of Clinton's international economic team had been trying to establish a framework for future trade talks. The talks had broken down with no agreement. A couple of days later, she and her husband and children drove for nearly three hours to a house they had on the Delaware Shore, for the Fourth of July weekend. The house was only sixteen feet wide, and she and Ed had had only about forty dollars in savings left after they bought it, in 1979. The beach house was their sanctuary, the place where they cut out the world. For a few years, before their children were born, they had banned taking their briefcases there.

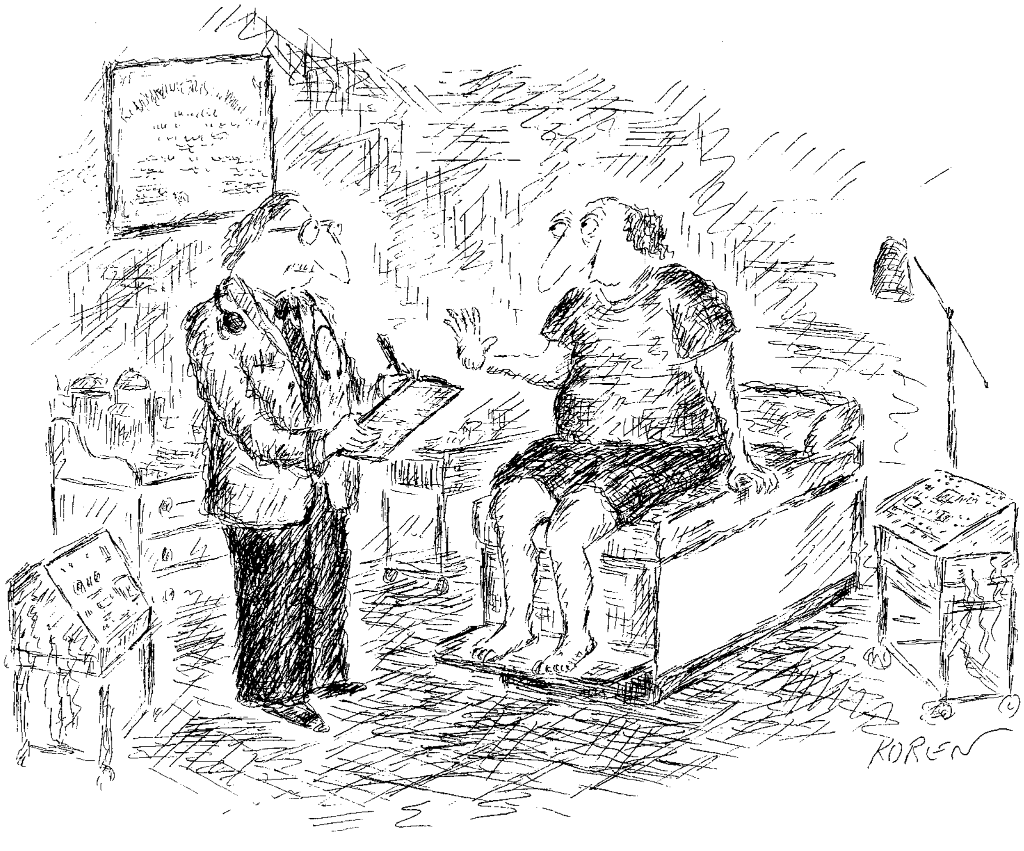
The day after they arrived at the beach, the telephone rang at about 8 A.M. It was a staffer from the National Economic Council who was calling from the White House. The Japanese Prime Minister had implored Clinton to resume the talks, the staffer told Barshefsky, and Clinton, who campaigned on a promise to change the economic relationship between the United States and Japan, had agreed. He wanted the negotiating team to return to Japan. They would leave tomorrow, but she was needed at the office for meetings that day.

She hung up the phone. "I told Ed. I told the kids. The kids were crushed, because this was so unsettling. This was so unexpected from their point of view." Usually so fluid, Barshefsky's style of delivery changes completely as she tells this story, as if the memory were still too painful. "I took the car. We had one car with us, so I left my husband and the children carless. Took the car. Drove home. We left that night. Packed and went out to Andrews Air Force Base. I was very upset. But it had to be done. The President made the right decision. There wasn't any question about that."

Cohen says he understood that she had no choice. He also knew that the departure was probably more painful for her than for him and the children. "She had to make this trip, and it was stressful and physically burdensome. Nonetheless, there we were at the beach on our holiday without her and without a car, which symbolically was sort of a low blow. It was the first time, I think, that I had been at the beach with the girls without her. Which is no big deal and I have the kids all the time, but there was something, there was something symbolic. The beach was always a sacred place."

On her first full day in China during the November, 1995, trip, Barshefsky awakened early and called home. "Sweetie, do you have your book?" she asked, referring to the Torah reading. Her daughter asked if they could put it off until tomorrow and Barshefsky did not argue.

After breakfast with the staff, she was scheduled to meet with the chairman of A.T. & T., who was in Beijing to push telecommunications in China. Barshef-



"Please, Doc—nothing too aggressive. I'm kind of attached to my symptoms."

sky regularly asks for industry input, and industry has returned the favor: before the intellectual-property-rights agreement was signed, many corporations lined up in support of sanctions, even though some contracts were delayed or cancelled.

"I told them if we never go in there that's fine," Robert Eaton, the chairman and chief executive officer of the Chrysler Corporation, said to me. Chrysler has one factory in China—Beijing Jeep—and is trying to open others. "I said, 'Make sure you get something meaningful.' " Eaton is a Presidential appointee to the Advisory Committee for Trade Policy and Negotiations. Previous Administrations, he complained, would sign agreements amid a flurry of ceremony and then walk away, without any real progress or monitoring. "Charlene and Mickey do not declare victory if nothing happens, and they do not sign an agreement that doesn't have any teeth in it. She wants teeth in it," he said, and went on, "There has been more progress with this Administration in trade than with the past two or three Administrations."

Shortly before two, Barshefsky and the staff left in a convoy of Embassy cars for the Trade Ministry Building, a new concrete edifice with polished marble floors and a huge center stairway covered in a blazing-red carpet. There were about fifteen people sitting on the Chinese side of the table, and after the head of the delegation, a vice-minister, made a few introductory remarks, Barshefsky immediately brought up the intellectual-property-rights agreement. She reviewed her concerns point by point. She said that China had fallen far short of several commitments they'd made, including inspecting the premises of compact-disk manufacturers and software producers. She was not ready to threaten sanctions. Instead, she told the Chinese delegation that the lack of action was "causing friction"—exactly the same words she'd used a year earlier, before the agreement was signed and when sanctions on more than a billion dollars' worth of goods were only hours away from going into effect. When the Chinese delegation head asked if she would like a break, because she looked tired, she responded, "I'm never tired."

The Chinese delegate gave a brief boilerplate response: China recognized that there was a problem with piracy, but the agreement was somewhat more difficult to enforce than China had imagined. The vice-minister did not respond to her comments about government failure to clean up the factories.

Then Barshefsky delivered what amounted to a tutorial on the World Trade Organization. (Ever conscious that a good negotiator must always make a task seem possible, she had told the staff earlier that she wanted the Chinese to think they were partway there.) She said China must accept the fact that it was an export powerhouse and that with that status came responsibility. If, after reviewing the requirements, China could not envisage meeting them, "it is time to shift our discussions to more productive areas," she said. By the time Barshefsky finished, she had spoken for almost four hours.

Protocol dictates that negotiators focus exclusively on their counterparts, but Barshefsky feels that this leads to missed signals. She prides herself on having very good instincts in reading people; she'd told me earlier that she suspected she had clinched the enforcement deal in February, 1995, when one of the negotiators moved his shoulders back after she'd said she was unwilling to accept the so-called final offer. At this meeting she studied the face of every member of their delegation. She said she'd sensed some tension at certain points but little acrimony over all.

Her instincts proved to be right. Reaction from the Chinese was muted, with few questions. The Chinese delegation head thanked Barshefsky for the work involved in preparing the paper but said he was not prepared to respond at that time—a good sign, in sharp contrast to the often combative responses. "I would say, in good U.S. fashion, the ball is in their court," Barshefsky said when we were back at the hotel.

After dinner with the Chinese and a staff meeting at the hotel, Barshefsky called Kantor at around 1 A.M.—it was noon in Washington—to report the day's progress. She did not sleep well (the heater in her room had been malfunctioning since her arrival) and she woke up with a start. The television was blaring CNN and she was amazed to find that it was morning already. She eyed the clock and was relieved to see that it was only 3 A.M. She went back to sleep.

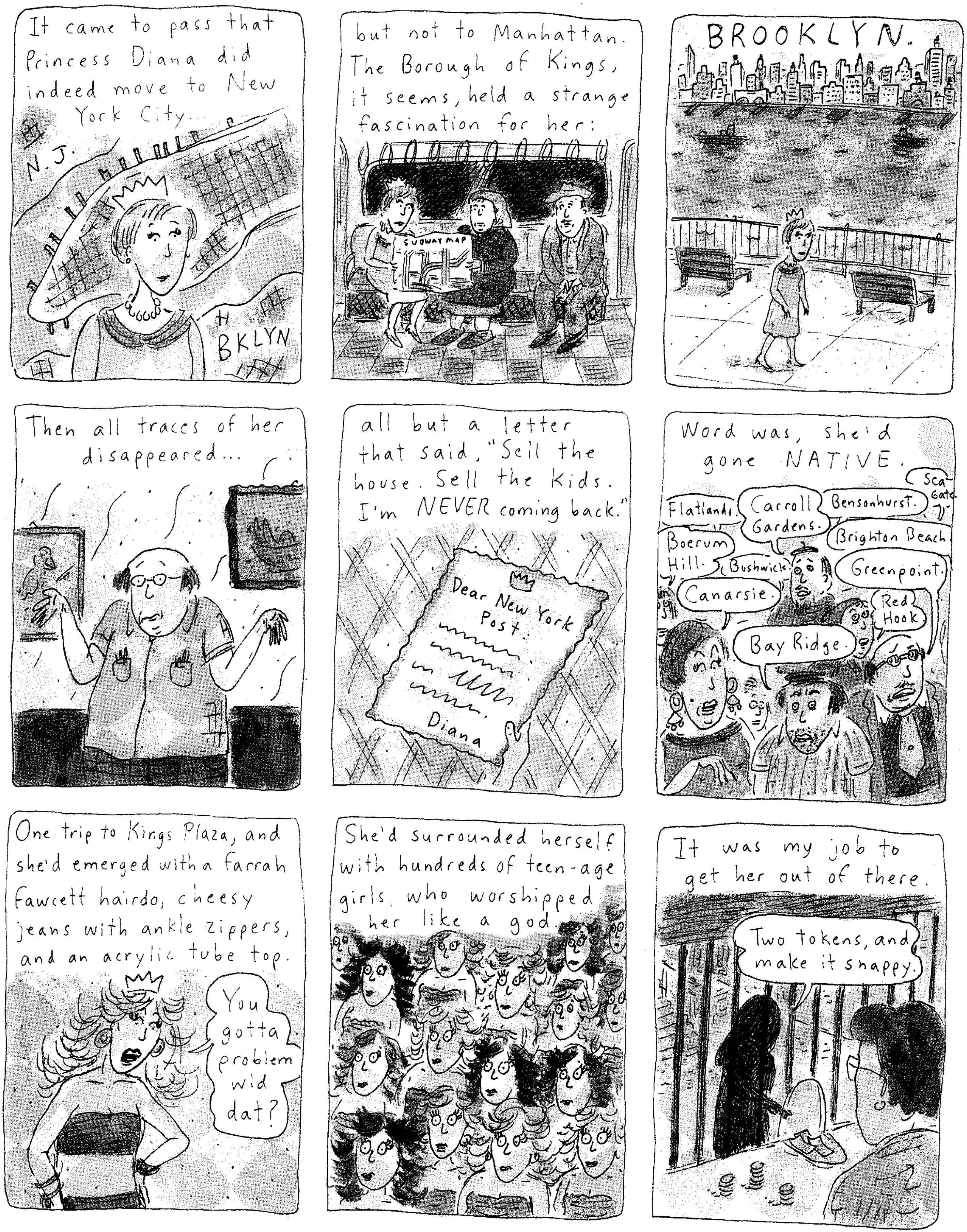
Her next scheduled meeting (after a breakfast with some American businessmen) was with officials from the ministry in charge of telecommunications, including the minister, Wu Jichuan. Barshefsky wanted to argue that the Chinese should let some American companies offer advanced-telecommunications services—E-mail, fax, voice mail, paging, and cellular-telephone networks—on a test basis in some cities. The Chinese, Barshefsky knew, had security worries. "There is the potential here for the introduction, on a massive scale, of ideas whose distribution was formerly restricted," she told me. "And that is of potential concern to the Chinese, given that the maintenance of internal order with a population of one billion two hundred million is so critical to the stability, as they view it, of the regime."

Later, sitting in a large chair in front of a decorated screen in a room in the telecommunications-ministry building, she told her Chinese counterpart that without advanced-telecommunications services China could not have a modern financial market, a modern transportation system, or a modern distribution system—all areas the Chinese were keenly interested in developing. American companies were more than willing to help. Allowing them to do so could make the Chinese rich, Deborah Lehr, one of Barshefsky's top aides, added. She and Barshefsky noticed a change in mood following this observation.

At other meetings, Minister Wu Jichuan or members of his staff had flatly rejected United States proposals, but Barshefsky noted that this time he adopted some of their arguments. He laid out his concerns, including fear that the presence of foreign companies might hinder the development of an indigenous market. This was an extremely positive sign. If he did not want to deal, he would have reeled off a bunch of statistics. Barshefsky pointed out that the arrival of foreign companies, particularly in the insurance business, had helped the local market grow and increased opportunities for domestic industry.

"Yes!" Barshefsky said with almost uncontrolled glee after the meeting, as she slid into the back seat of an Embassy

HEART OF DARKNESS


It came to pass that Princess Diana did indeed move to New York City...
N.J.
BKLYN
but not to Manhattan. The Borough of Kings, it seems, held a strange fascination for her:
SUBWAY MAP
BROOKLYN.
Then all traces of her disappeared...
all but a letter that said, "Sell the house. Sell the kids. I'm NEVER coming back."
Dear New York Post,
Diana
Word was, she'd gone NATIVE.
Flatlands.
Carroll Gardens.
Bensonhurst.
Sea Gate.
Boerum Hill.
Bushwick.
Brighton Beach.
Greenpoint.
Canarsie.
Red Hook.
Bay Ridge.
One trip to Kings Plaza, and she'd emerged with a Farrah Fawcett hairdo, cheesy jeans with ankle zippers, and an acrylic tube top.
You gotta problem wid dat?
She'd surrounded herself with hundreds of teen-age girls, who worshipped her like a god.
It was my job to get her out of there.
Two tokens, and make it snappy.

R. Chast

car. She was still relishing the encounter. "That's the best meeting I've ever had with him," she said. The United States is the largest exporter of services in the world, and breaking into the advanced-telecommunications market could be the first step toward persuading China to open up to other service industries that the United States excels in. But caution was in order. "We cannot let them use American companies as their bank," she said. American businesses have a well-founded fear that after financing Chinese development and transferring technology they will be asked to leave.

Also in the car with Barshefsky was Lee Sands, forty-four, the U.S.T.R.'s resident China scholar. Like Lehr, he has spent much of the past few years commuting to China and, with Lehr, has been responsible for laying much of the groundwork in the China agreements. To unwind, Barshefsky asked the driver to take them to Liu Li Chang, Glazed Tile Works Street, which Sands called a kind of eighteenth-century Greenwich Village—a section of town where writers once lived and booksellers now sell hand-painted volumes.

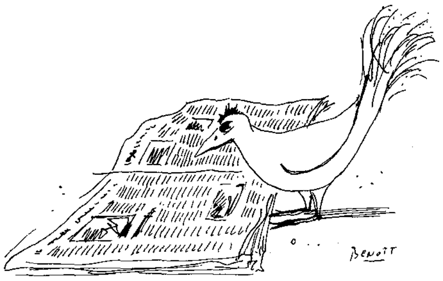
Barshefsky almost never allows herself even a few minutes for sightseeing. Travel is hard on all the families at the trade office, and in this group the evidence was plentiful. Lehr calculated that after she married, in May of 1994, she saw her husband only fifty days in nine months, because he lived in New York during the week and she was nearly always in China or Washington. Sands is divorced; his college-age son lives with him while his daughter lives with her mother, in Hong Kong. Barshefsky told me later, "I guess the result of that is that I go wherever it is I'm going, I get done what I need to get done as efficiently as possible, and I come home. So I've been to many, many interesting places and I've seen relatively little, because I don't look for additional opportunity to be away. I'm sure at some point I'll come to regret that, that an extra day here or there probably wouldn't have mattered. But on each individual trip the desire is always to do the work, to get the work done, and to go home."

DESPITE the disastrous Fourth of July of 1993, Barshefsky said, she felt that the children looked on her first trips with some excitement. She'd show them where she was going and ask what kinds of gifts to bring home. But after about a year the novelty began to wear off for everyone in the family. The United States was taking a harder bargaining stand with Japan than it ever had, and Barshefsky was in near-constant motion. It seemed that either she was on her way to Japan—once every month or six weeks, for an average of a week to ten days—or the Japanese were on their way to the United States. During eighteen years of private practice, she had prided herself on being organized enough so that she never had to stay up all night. But suddenly she found herself negotiating throughout the night. In October of 1994, when the United States signed its first five agreements with the Japanese, she negotiated for twenty-two hours straight.

On the days she wasn't travelling or in negotiations, Barshefsky made a point of taking her turn driving the carpool and getting home by around seven-thirty. If her staff scheduled a late meeting, she reminded them that "as a routine matter I live at home—I don't live at the office." But that became impossible when the Japanese were in town. She began to think of her sessions with the Japanese as a war of attrition. "They will stay up night after night, and my feeling was, If they are going to stay up all night, so will I." Her colleagues gave her the nickname Stonewall.

She tried to shift focus as soon as she saw her children, reminding herself, "I'm home now, and I'm not going to focus on Issue X or Issue Y." Sometimes she succeeded and sometimes she didn't. "Even if you're not at the office, if you're in an intense negotiation, that tends to be what you think about," she said. "So at home you can be distracted, unable to wind down, and constantly thinking of new approaches to the negotiation."

When the preoccupation lasted for more than an evening or so, her husband sometimes called her on it. "I would just say, 'Look, I've got to point out that I thought you were short with Mari' or I'd say, 'Devra needs some help on such-and-such, and I think you need to pay some attention here,' " he remembered telling her. "It doesn't happen too often, but typically it happens when she is exhausted or under a lot of pressure."



Whenever she came home and Cohen saw that she was exhausted, he urged her to concentrate on the children, which she did; he was an adult and would get through it. "When you've been gone for a week or two and you come home for three weeks or four weeks and you're gone for another two weeks and you come home for two weeks and you're gone for ten days, you feel as though you'd lost touch with the family," Barshefsky said. "The homework goes on. The kids have taken tests. They've had music lessons, or they've been with friends. Ed has had this or that at work or events happen in his family or in my family—with parents, and so on. And you feel almost dissociated from that, as though you're an observer looking in."

Instead of first asking where she was going, her daughters wanted to know immediately when she was coming home. Devra, then six and a half, had been crushed when her mother could not attend the school play because of a trip to Indonesia, one she could not reschedule. On that trip, every time Barshefsky called home her husband told her that Devra was sad, unable to find her usual rhythm—she missed her mother. Barshefsky tried to pull her out of her mood on the phone, telling her she'd be home soon. But the effort was unavailing. Cohen told her that this trip was the hardest on him yet. Barshefsky had never before missed an important event in the life of either child; she intended not to repeat that mistake.

She believed she had a strong marriage to a good man, but she knew that, even so, her job was testing his limits. He'd say proudly that she was keeping the marketplace honest. When she was in Japan, he devised a code that would enable her to signal whether the negotiations were going well or poorly, in case her phones were being monitored. He'd joke about being seated at the "spouses' table" at official dinners, talking about the weather and raising children and how sad it was that the department store Woodward & Lothrop had closed. But when she was travelling he had almost no life other than going to work and taking care of the children. He seldom bicycled, his favorite pastime, because he didn't have time. He had taken an Interior Department job in April of 1994, with the understanding that he would rarely travel and that he would be home by 7 P.M. when Barshefsky was travelling. At those times, he lost the flexibility to work at night.

After she returned from the Indonesia trip, he told her he felt tired and worn down. He wanted her to be able to do her job. Even when she was home he was doing the majority of the housework, he said, including cooking and grocery shopping. Operating a house while she was out of town sapped all his time and his emotion, he'd said to her. He felt lonely. He found himself regularly getting angry the few days before she left on a trip. "I know she doesn't travel for the heck of it. And so I couldn't get angry at her. You get frustrated at the circumstances."

"He's the guy I'm interested in. He's just not the kind of guy I'm interested in."

• •

LAURA D'ANDREA TYSON, who, as the head of the National Economic Council, is the President's senior adviser on economic policy, met regularly with Barshefsky to discuss trade issues, and the two quickly struck up a friendship. An economics professor at the University of California at Berkeley, she had joined the Administration as the chair of the Council of Economic Advisers, and had taken her current job when Robert Rubin left it to become Secretary of the Treasury. Tyson moved to Washington with her husband, Erik Tarloff, who is a screenwriter, and their nine-year-old son, Elliot, and, though she and Barshefsky talked about their children, she recalled, they talked most intensely about the impact of their jobs on their husbands. She told Barshefsky that Erik seemed to have an underlying anger over the daily demands and interruptions of her job, because whenever she was called back to the office or had a late meeting he had to pick up the pieces. Barshefsky told Tyson that she had the same problem.

"The thing that struck me as so similar," Tyson told me, "was the notion that, by making a choice that was driven by our sense of responsibility, that was being translated either into their thinking that we were making ourselves more important or our spouse was thinking that we were making them less important. We were diminishing them by the choice." Tyson and I were sitting in the living room of her town house the day after Thanksgiving. Even before we started our interview, Tyson, a stylish woman in her late forties, who was dressed in a cream-colored tunic cinched at the waist, had taken two calls from the office.

Tyson said she and Barshefsky noted how frequently they found themselves saying, "I'm sorry this and I'm sorry that. I have to do this and I have to do that." What was particularly difficult was the husbands' belief at times that their wives were sending them "a kind of message: By the way, my job is more important than you are."

Barshefsky thought it was worse for Tyson, because Tyson had had to deal with the dislocation of the move from California. But Tyson thought that Barshefsky had by far the more difficult circumstances, because she travelled and her husband worked long hours himself. It annoyed Tyson when her husband sometimes responded to queries by saying it didn't matter if she travelled because she was barely at home anyway. "The truth is I can just tell it matters," she said. "I come back from trips and everything's a lot worse. Elliot's more unhappy and Erik's more unhappy and everybody's angry. So I said to Charlene, 'I really could not do what you've done. I could not do it. I would not be here.' "

As time went on, Tyson said, Barshefsky began to wonder how long she could last in her present job. "She talked about the cost and the benefits. She was delaying these things and the cost would get larger, and she herself knew that she had to make some adjustment."

After eighteen months, by the fall of 1994, Barshefsky began to reconsider her life. "The impact was cumulative on all of us, and we all arrived at the same conclusion—that the pace, the amount of time away from home, was unsustainable," she told me one night on the phone. Later, she added, "As much as I would like to think that it is quality time that matters, the fact is I think it's quantity time as well. I think back to my childhood. I just liked knowing my mom was around, even if she wasn't doing anything with me at all, and I suspect that it's the same for my kids."

Teachers, she said, had told her they saw positive effects of her job on her children. Mari chose to do a school project on El Salvador after hearing Barshefsky talk about the ambassador. Devra chose China as her country for the international day at her school. But Barshefsky knew she needed to make a change. She wanted to serve the entire four-year term and she also wanted to be available to her husband and her children.

"It was clear to me that she wasn't going to make it at that pace," Cohen said to me. "She was physically tired, and I think when you're physically tired you just break. And it was wearing thin. The travel, in particular, was wearing thin with all of us. It was one of those things that are just self-evident."

They talked about the possibility of having someone else assume responsibility for Japan. She had completed her side of the negotiations with Japan, so it was a natural changing point. Kantor accepted the proposal. And since his principal deputy was leaving, in December, 1994, he promoted her to his second-in-command. "He understood that I had been gone too much and that I needed to be home more and I needed to not burn out," Barshefsky said.

In China, a year later, Barshefsky was to meet with the deputy director general of the Supreme People's Procuraturate, the prosecutor in charge of enforcing the intellectual-property-rights agreement. Barshefsky had decided to use a friendlier approach in this meeting, because she believed he wanted to help.

The prosecutor spoke quickly and with emotion for long periods before the translation, gesticulating as he looked to his staff. His office had worked hard during the enforcement period under the agreement; they had launched more than a thousand possible criminal-copyright-infringement investigations. Barshefsky had learned that often the most important factor in a successful negotiation was clear, simple language. In contrast to the prosecutor, she enunciated each word and spoke only a few short sentences before waiting for the translation. Her body language was open; she made more eye contact with the prosecutor and his staff than she had with any of the other Chinese officials. Piracy exports, she said, had increased, and this was "causing friction" with the United States. She added that the economic losses from CD-ROMs could be huge—a single pirated disk selling for less than seven dollars can contain more than ten thousand dollars' worth of programs. She reminded him that President Clinton was monitoring the situation carefully.

Later, she told me, "There are ways of criticizing and ways of criticizing. He knows we think they're not doing enough with the CD factories. . . . He wants to help us. He just needs to get the political message. We need to try to get Wu Yi to do something about this."

After one more meeting, Barshefsky returned to the hotel. Once there, she visited the gift shops looking for presents for her daughters; she bought her older daughter a ceramic box decorated with a frog, the mascot of her new school. At ten-thirty, she was scheduled to meet with her staff in her suite. After some uncertainty, Barshefsky received word that her meeting with Wu Yi, the trade minister, was on for the next day—her final full day in Beijing. "One of the marvellous things about the Chinese is that no one can say yes, but everyone can say no," one staff member had quipped earlier. Barshefsky knew that Wu might dismiss the "road map" paper as a negotiating tactic, but she had told her staff that her reply was ready: "Don't insult Clinton by deciding that this is a ploy. We've done it at his direction. The price is very high."

Wu, who is fifty-seven, is a short, sturdy woman with a strong presence. She wore her hair swept up into a bun and was dressed in a Chanel-like suit with a plaid jacket and black skirt. Wu has sometimes been combative, but on that day she appeared to be taking a different tack, laughing and making humorous observations. She greeted Barshefsky with a broad smile under the large chandelier in the trade ministry's ceremonial room, inquired about her health—Barshefsky had had a bout of pneumonia late last summer—and led her to one of the four oversized white chairs at the front of the room, signalling everyone else to take their places. She thanked Barshefsky warmly for spending so many months preparing the paper on the W.T.O. and said that China appreciated the personal interest the United States President was taking in the issue.

Barshefsky took her cue from Wu's opening remarks and subtly shifted her tone. She wanted to be sure there was no hint of lecturing, which Wu hates, but she also needed to say in unequivocal terms that immediate action had to be taken on the bilateral agreements if there was to be movement on China's membership in the W.T.O.

For the first time, Wu acknowledged the magnitude of the piracy problem. Because this was an area in which she had expertise as an engineer, she said, the problem was of great personal concern and would receive her attention. One of the problems they faced, she said, was that when officials cracked down in one area, a pirate popped up in another. They needed to get the factories under control, and they needed to educate the public better and to institute more structural reforms.

"Your demands in the paper are still very, very high," she said. But, she added, the paper had given her some hope—hope that she trusted would not be dashed.

The meeting with Wu ran forty-five minutes longer than Wu's assistant had said was allotted for the Americans, and Wu, smiling, gave Barshefsky three bearhugs goodbye under the giant chandelier. Though Wu had not committed the Chinese to using the "road map," she had not dismissed it, either. Barshefsky thought she had come close to achieving her goals.

"Wu was gracious and respectful. She was bending over backward to be nice," Barshefsky said to an official in the Embassy limousine, which had a small American flag flying from the hood. The next question was what Barshefsky should do about a press conference scheduled for later in the afternoon at the American Embassy. She did not want to sound mollified by the Chinese when there were still so many outstanding problems. "The last thing I want is a headline in the New York *Times* saying 'U.S. CONCILIATORY TOWARD CHINA.' " She also needed to remain in character for the press, who view her as tough. "My worst nightmare would be a story that said, 'Charlene Barshefsky, the bull moose, comes in and plays nice,' " she said later, back at the hotel. Yet she did not want to blast the Chinese. President Clinton and President Jiang Zemin were still scheduled to meet in Osaka the following week. (Clinton sent Vice-President Al Gore in his place when the budget talks in Washington broke down.) She considered cancelling the press conference, but agreed to go forward after the Embassy official said that such an action would raise unnecessary speculation.

That evening, in a room at the Embassy packed with the international press, she characterized the three days of meetings as detailed, direct, and constructive. But she also announced that six of the seven closed CD factories had reopened, causing serious concerns, which she said she had relayed to the Chinese. Would failure in enforcement affect membership in the World Trade Organization? "China cannot expect the American people to support new agreements if existing agreements are not enforced."

The following day in news reports Barshefsky was portrayed as maintaining a hard line on China's membership in the W.T.O. and on piracy. She had, it appeared then, found her middle ground.

On November 19th, two weeks after leaving for China, Barshefsky flew home from Japan, having travelled to Beijing, Hong Kong, and Osaka. While she was in Osaka, Wu Yi, in a meeting with Kantor, said the Chinese were willing to work with the United States road-map paper for the World Trade Organization. Later, the Chinese announced that they had made some progress in halting piracy. Production had been suspended at five of the suspect factories, they said, and the Customs Service was making "serious" seizures at the border of suspected pirated goods. Five thousand theatres showing pirated laser-disk videos had also been closed, and inspectors had been assigned to CD factories throughout the country, checking for illegal production. In Barshefsky's view, it was progress, but still not remotely enough. It was in late January that Kantor warned the Chinese that the United States might impose massive sanctions. Some Administration officials had questioned whether it was worth risking the already fragile relationship between China and the United States "over the copyright on Mickey Mouse," as one of them put it, but Pat Buchanan's attacks on the Administration's trade policies inadvertently strengthened Kantor and Barshefsky's argument for taking a tough position. No deadline was set for a decision on the sanctions, but Kantor and Barshefsky were scheduled to meet with Administration officials in the coming weeks to discuss further action.

But that was months away. On the night Barshefsky's family picked her up at the airport, they stopped for a quick dinner. Her older daughter, wound up by the excitement of seeing her mother, didn't get to sleep until 1 A.M.

Barshefsky, too, had trouble sleeping. "By the time I got into bed, I didn't know where I was, but I had this feeling like I was on an airplane and I was still moving. I couldn't really sleep. I kept waking up and thinking that I had to be somewhere," she told me shortly after returning.

A few weeks later, I asked Barshefsky if she felt she had applied the lessons she learned from negotiating to her life, making sure in her daily series of decisions and compromises that what she gave up was not more than what she gained. Had her victories and hard work been diminished by what have seemed to be repeated failures by the Chinese to enforce agreements? She replied that, despite the frustrations, the Clinton Administration has made significant progress in trade. She pointed to the rise in exports and the increase in American jobs cited by the trade office.

Barshefsky also told me that, while she could not imagine having missed the chance to serve, her family had paid a price that she was no longer willing to pay. Life has become somewhat more manageable for her. She had travelled domestically at least once a month this year, but she had been to Asia only twice since signing the intellectual-property-rights agreement in February of 1995 (though she was on her way to Bogotá last week). She now felt she had more options. As she said this, I was reminded of something she'd told me during our first interview: "The one question I struggle with all the time is whether I would recommend to my daughters that they follow the same route that I did. Sometimes, often, that answer is a clear no. But then other times I think that I can't possibly tell them they should not. They see the fun I have had. I go back and forth, back and forth." ♦

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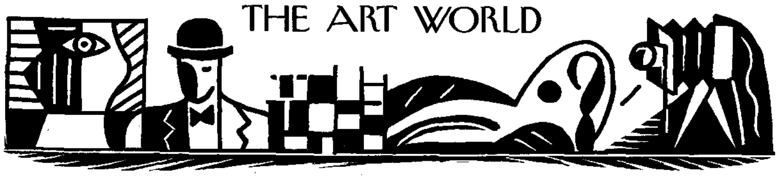


CALIFORNIA DREAMER

The drawings—and perennial drawing power—of David Hockney.

BY SIMON SCHAMA

THE little girl stood in front of "Fuck (Cunt)," evidently impressed. "Mummy, Mummy, he did this when he was only *eleven!*"

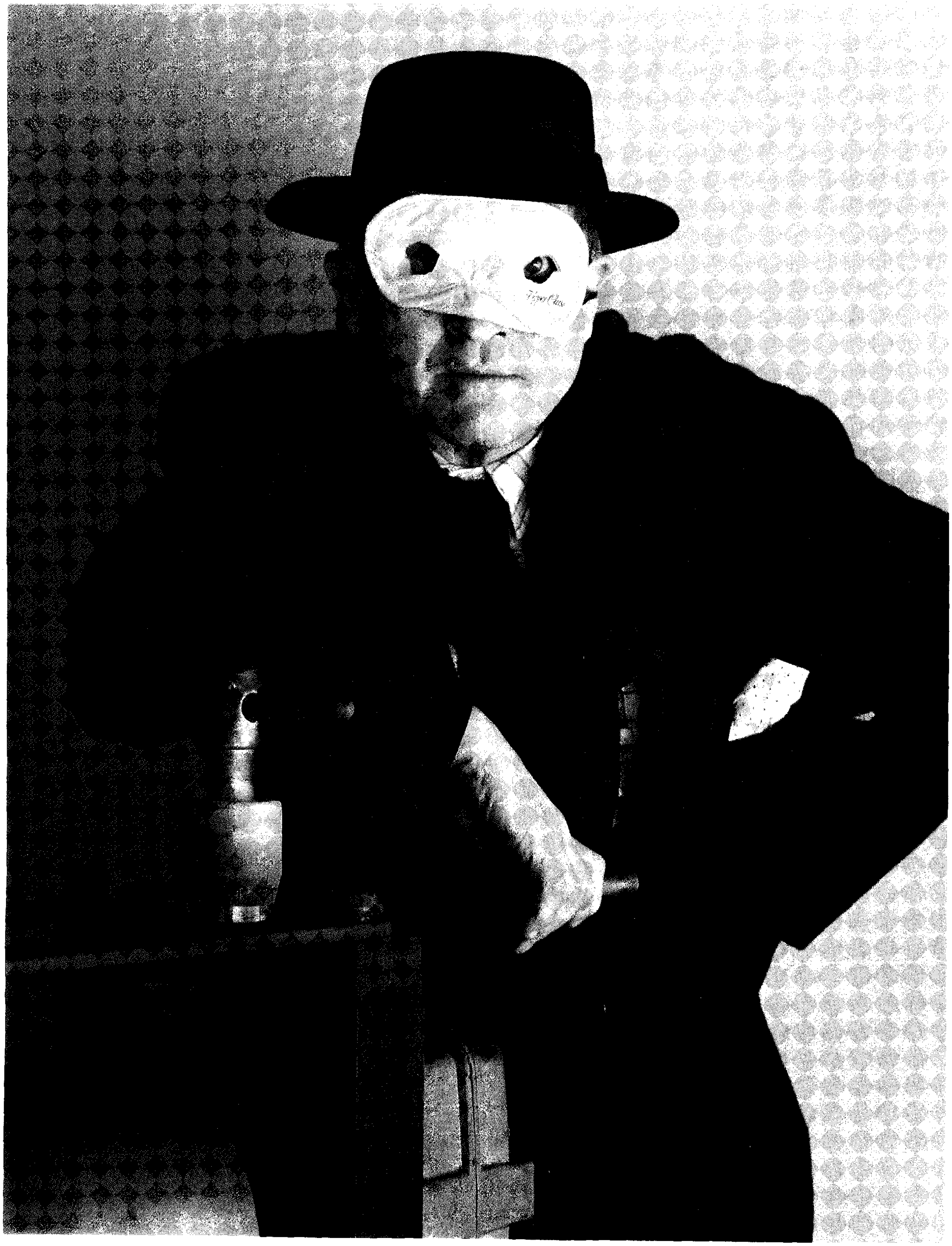
"No, dear," said the mummy, tugging her away from the David Hockney drawing of 1961. "It's No. 11 in the exhibition. Now come and see the nice swimming pool." It was, after all, the nice pool, not to mention the nice asparagus, the nice doggies, the nice mum and dad, and the nice friends that were pleasing the crowds at London's Royal Academy this winter. What made the retrospective exhibition of Hockney's drawings a family outing was Hockney's reputation as a user-friendly modernist, an unthreatening prince of visual charm. For all its shortcomings as a serious review of his work, and despite (or possibly because of) the critics' habit of writing off Hockney's formal virtuosity as a sure sign of stunted conceptual growth, the retrospective is proving to be at least as popular at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, where it arrived last month and where it will be until April 28th.

Hockney has had to live for a long time now with the accusation that he's a splashy lightweight. In 1948, when he *was* only eleven, he attracted his first notice, as a member of the Bradford Grammar School Art Society. "Hockney D. provided light relief" was the verdict of the school magazine. A precocious student of the arts, he assumed that this was a reference to the sculptural quality of his work. And those who believe that his work is fatally limited by its cheery celebration of life's sensuous pleasures (what, no *viscera*?) will not have their minds much changed by discovering that Hockney admires not only Picasso and Matisse but also Dufy and Fragonard. Of the last, he once said, doubtless feelingly, "He is an artist who has been thought sometimes to be much too pleasurable, much too playful, much too sweet to be serious." As Hockney went on to point out, though, "People tend to forget that play is serious."

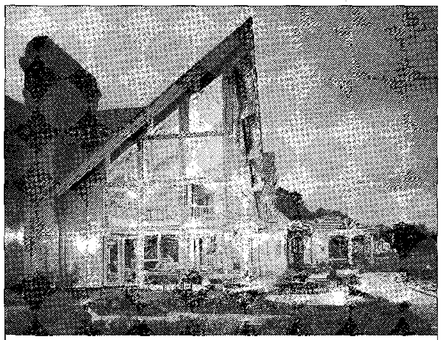
It would be good to report that this show of drawings does full justice to Hockney's unflagging powers of creative mischief. But, after the scrappy naughtiness of the sixties, niceness ensues with a vengeance, swaddling everyone and everything—veggies, lovers, pals, scenery—with a cuddly blanket of affability. The fault may lie with the curatorial conception, for, although Hockney's indisputable brilliance as a draftsman deserves celebrating, many of his most powerful drawings need to be seen alongside the radiant, enigmatic paintings into which they evolved if their conceptual subtlety and formal authority are to be properly appreciated. One of Hockney's weirdly conjured suburban apparitions—the "Lawn Sprinkler," of 1966, with its helically turning spray flattened against the California sky—looks tentative and washed out in the absence of the great painting it became. Likewise, the studies made for the opera drop curtains of the seventies and eighties, deprived of the sound and spectacle of performance, have the subdued quality of working documents rather than the bravura triumph of the finished sets.

While this show includes a great many of the artist's favorite things, it isn't all comfy couches and pretty boys. Hockney's featured role among the London culture pinups of the sixties—the peroxide bangs, the Panzer cap, the fish-and-chips Yorkshire vowels—ought not to blind us to his gritty integrity. Though Hockney was not exactly a fugitive from the publicity hounds, his pose as working-class glamour-puss was mostly a creation of his handlers—especially the dealer John Kasmin, who shrewdly marketed him as the Beatle of the brushes. (Oddly, Hockney's early cartoonish line drawings actually do resemble John Lennon's better efforts at visual jokes, as well as Thurber's whimsical fantasies.) A more reliable guide to the authentic Hockney was the unsixties sign he posted next to the bed in his London terrace flat: "Get Up and Work Immediately." Briefly the cynosure of fashion, for much longer he has been impervious to gallery cults, and much more likely to search for inspiration among the Renaissance and Baroque masters than among the contemporary avant-garde. Hockney himself is fond of pointing out that, for all his reputation as a gregarious pleasure lover, he is in fact something of a loner: happiest in a small group of old friends, romantically wistful for the perfect lover, and now, increasingly, stricken by deafness and locked up in his own company. "If the crowd goes one way, I think my natural instinct says: 'Go the other way, David,' " he remarked in 1976.

WHEN Hockney, a twenty-two-year-old art-school graduate, arrived at the Royal College of Art, in 1959, the crowd was going seriously Abstract Expressionist, excited by the news from New York. Though by no means immune to the crowd's spell, Hockney, encouraged by his close friend R. B. Kitaj, was from the outset determined to work in a figurative language, however playfully chewed up. Some of the most impressive products of this early gutsiness are the wiry, droll drawings that he scratched and scribbled on dingy paper and that recorded the exuberantly randy pleasures of gay life in the London of the early sixties. To call these meaty little sketches "homoerotic" is to give them the air of a visual manifesto when in fact they are unapologetically scruffy pleasure marks, full of holes and hickeys, as happy-go-lucky as the lavatory graffiti scribbled through them, and giving off a distinct whiff of tube-station piss. But the cartoonish rough-trade scrawler was also a softie. The "Study for Doll Boy" (it was worked up into a funny, sharp painting) was actually a backhanded love letter to the androgynous idol of English pop, Cliff Richard, on whose floppy pompadour Hockney desperately doted. The



David Hockney, photographed by Helmut Newton in Los Angeles, December 18, 1995.



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title of "We Two Boys Together Clinging" was both an allusion to his literary hero Walt Whitman and a giggly reference to a newspaper headline about stranded hikers that proclaimed, "TWO BOYS CLING TO CLIFF ALL NIGHT."

Like other gay English expatriates in California—his friend Isherwood, for example—Hockney has had a long love-hate relationship with his Englishness. (He has made the Golden State his permanent home since 1978.) The artist has always detested the sour insularity and mean-spiritedness that he thinks characterize Britain's critical establishment. But Britain—even if as satirical target—has provoked some of his most colorfully affectionate work. The two "Colonial Governor" drawings of 1962, with their beetroot-nosed, plumed-and-helmeted, barking proconsular panjandrums, are wickedly funny animations. When the editor of the London *Sunday Times Magazine*, Mark Boxer (himself a wonderfully spiky cartoonist), sent him to Egypt, in 1963, Hockney produced a scintillating post-Suez album of drawings that gleefully jumbled every kind of impression of Egypt as "abroad." Hockney had already developed an interest in the stylized processional figures of Egyptian reliefs and wall paintings, and he applied the same flat formalism to giant poster images, in colored crayon, of the British Empire's bogeyman, Gamal Abdel Nasser, depicting him complete with anti-imperialist dental work and grinning unrepentantly beside garage lockups or posing ingratiatingly in doorways as pedestrians pass imperturbably by. And it was in Egypt that Hockney's lifelong obsession with the ambiguities of framing devices seems to have begun—from the glass vitrines of the Cairo Museum to the rugs and curtains spread out brilliantly in interiors.

Paradoxically, then, it was Hockney's Orientalism that prepared him for his greater infatuation with Occidentalism: Southern California as an idyll of dazzling light gleaming off well-oiled pecs. What he in fact found was something both less and more than the soft-core fantasies he had browsed through in the pages of *Physique Pictorial*, the photographic source for his early male nudes reaching eagerly for the shower nozzles. But the perfectly delineated West Coast rumps, registered as swiftly and economically as if Hockney had run his fingers lightly over their contours, are almost a pretext for making stunning neo-neoclassical compositions, like "Clean Boy"—a drawing full of air and space and dry light, in which the coy aestheticism of the eighteenth-century passion for Hellenic beauty has been made candidly physical. In fact, it was not so much the human as the architectural expressions of California life—hard-edged, clean-cut, glaringly white or intensely colored—that supplied Hockney with his boldest formal experiments: his answer, in effect, to the dominance of pure abstraction. For, while mature abstraction, in the work of color-field and stain painters such as Morris Louis and Kenneth Noland, sought to obliterate even a residual distinction between figure and ground, leaving the field monopolized by the constituents of painting itself, Hockney moved in precisely the opposite direction. Intuitively excited by the tonal relationships that could be produced by strong bands and strips of black and white set against a ground of cerulean blue, he resolved them back into their figural source as a bank façade shimmering in the Los Angeles heat haze. It was as though he had seen through color-field abstraction and dismissed it as somehow inadequate to the task of representing the essence of the modern condition—human behavior caught in fleeting time. Minimalism, with its preference for the universal over the particular, for monumental statements rather than local anecdotes, was, he believed, ultimately barren in its conceited grandeur. Hockney would therefore devote himself to inventing forms that would seize the most slippery and momentary episodes of contemporary experience and trap them in his icons: the forever-running shower; the fleeting smile; the permanently suspended splash.

THIS has been an ambitious project, wonderfully realized, for the most part. Had Hockney done nothing except the works in this mode, his reputation as a genuinely original and powerful artist would have been secure. But his creative restlessness in an intellectual marketplace accustomed to single-idea signatures has been equated by some critics with dilettantism. And there are other unforgivable sins: the seductive-ness of his color; the sheer facility of his drawing; the gallery of friends paraded in brilliant crayon portraits, with their incongruous closeness of exhibitionism and intimacy (masturbating Mo, pink-eyed Ossie, and Hockney's mother encased in black polka dots); his uncanny ability to breathe new life into forms that adamant modernists would rather see defunct—the conversation piece, the domestic-pair portrait, the quotations from Domenichino, Lorenzetti, Hogarth, Gainsborough, and Seurat. Most reprehensible of all, perhaps, is his excessive friendliness with the sister arts poetry and literature, opera and theatre—flirtations that subvert modern art's repeated proclamations of its own formal uniqueness.

Or is the problem Hockney's candor in conducting his continuing education in public, as his friend Henry Geldzahler once put it? Not all the adventures in self-instruction, it's true, have worked out equally well. For example, the passion for Picasso, whom Hockney especially admires for his refusal to be satisfied with a single graphic style, has produced neo-Cubist portraits that seem doggedly devoted rather than creatively inspired. Still, despite the uneven output, especially in the past ten years, we should be grateful that Hockney refuses to leave well enough alone. For his compulsive fidgetiness has also produced unanticipated departures like the canyon paintings and drawings, those drive-through compositions that bring together multiple-view impressions of a journey—road signs, street maps, geological slices, aerial views—not as in a collage but as experienced serially through the window of a moving car.

In telling ways, these latest works are both the logical outcome and the direct opposite of the poolside compositions that made Hockney famous: they replace freeze-frame with speed-up, and push the eye through areas of solid paint which have been quickened into the flashing curves of his abstract roadscapes. At the same time, his portrait drawings, touched by the shadow of mortality thrown over parents and friends, have turned elegiac. But, even if Hockney may not know what visions lie around the next unpredictable bend in the road, it seems unlikely that he's in the mood to take his foot off the gas. ♦

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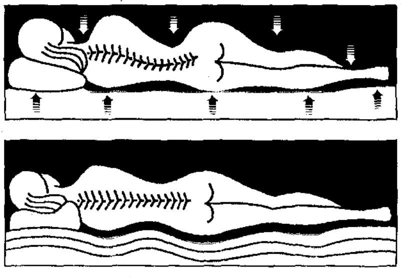

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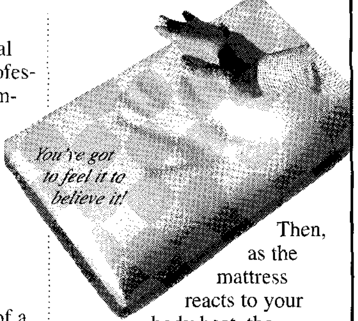

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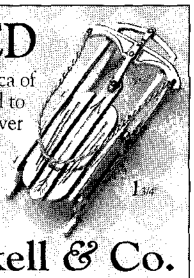

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A RED DEATH

What the Aldo Moro kidnapping did to Italy.

BY GEORGE STEINER

VIA CAETANI, in Rome, was always a touch sinister. It is flanked by one of those sombre, worn palaces that have been converted to educational and antiquarian purposes. The name is that of a princely family into which a wealthy American patroness married—a patroness who, after the Second World War, edited and published the illustrious polyglot review of poetry, fiction, and literary essays called *Botteghe Oscure*. This short thoroughfare, at the edge of Rome's ancient ghetto, acquired macabre world fame when, on May 9, 1978, at a point equidistant between the party headquarters of the Christian Democrats and that of the Communists, the Red Brigades dumped the bullet-riddled corpse of Aldo Moro. It had been fifty-five days since the former Prime Minister and longtime leader of Christian Democracy was kidnapped in a bloody ambush on Via Fani, on March 16th. Now a large marble plaque bearing an oddly idealized visage of Moro and a text of suitable anger and sorrow marks the spot where the victim was found. There are not many sightseers.

Yet, as Richard Drake points out in his book "The Aldo Moro Murder Case" (Harvard; $45), those fifty-five days and Moro's execution mark one of the most complex and fascinating episodes in Italian and, indeed, international postwar political history. Even after four trials, a parliamentary commission, volumes of testimony whose tens of thousands of pages fully rival those of the Kennedy-assassination inquiries, and a host of monographs (legal, historical, political, confessional), numerous essentials remain obscure or frankly incredible—again, as with J.F.K. And, as with the Warren report, the official judicial findings raise more questions than they answer. This truth has bred a welter of theories, sober, opportunistic, shrewd, and lunatic. Professor Drake's somewhat pedestrian but careful (and caring) reconstruction picks its way through a veritable morass of contradictions and possibilities.

Aldo Moro was no stellar personality. A faithful Catholic, schooled in legal, social, and economic studies, he was, from his student days, spotted by the Catholic Church and its political allies. His manifest integrity, combined with a gift for conciliation and a readiness to work hard and selflessly, led to rapid advancement. In a turbulent postwar labyrinth of partisan intrigues and Communist advances, the Vatican and the Christian Democrats needed every available talent. In 1955, Moro, not yet forty, became Minister of Justice. Two years later, he took over the always sensitive portfolio of public instruction. Soon he was elevated to the key post of Secretary of the Party. A patient listener, a virtuoso of elusive rhetoric—the Italian tongue lends itself to eloquent vacuity—Moro took on the mantle of Alcide De Gasperi, the Christian Democrats' tutelary spirit in the perilous years after 1945. Building, step by cautious step, on the covert foundations laid by Amintore Fanfani, his predecessor as Secretary, Aldo Moro sought to prepare his party and the Italian political system for the "opening to the left," with the Socialists.

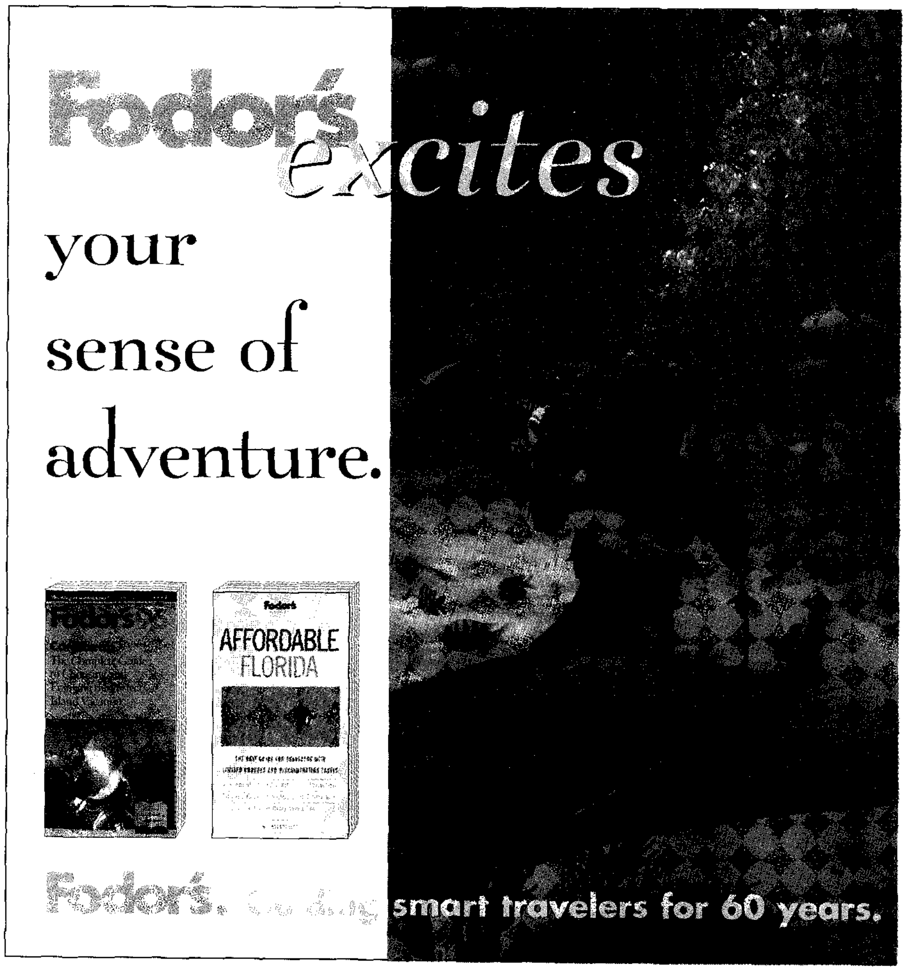
IGA
Steven Dana

Richard Drake (top right) investigates a case that rivals the Kennedy assassination.

Professor Drake's account is inevitably compressed, but it is insightful. The center that, roughly defined, formed the hegemony and creed of Christian Democracy was at every point under a dual pressure. Diverse monarchist and Fascist or neo-Fascist movements, often conspiratorial, often supported by more or less clandestine interests in the Church, in the military, in banking and finance, and—most worrying of all—in the Italian military and civilian secret services, threatened from the right. Socialists of every shade of radicalism and a Communist Party with deep roots in resistance to Mussolini prior to and during the war, with such fiefs as Bologna and Venice in its grasp, with a record of political education and industrial action dating back to Gramsci, pressed from the left. Add to these opposed but, on opaque occasions, momentarily allied thrusts a collection of anarchists, Trotskyites, Maoists, and you have one of the most complicated, explosive political jigsaws in modern history. For reasons that have never been altogether clear, moreover, a persistent nerve of violence, of homicidal rage, runs through a society, a culture, that is normally tolerant, cynically skeptical of fanaticism, and humane in its instincts. The tradition of political murders goes back to the Renaissance. Triggered by too many foreign occupations or too much domestic *misère*, agricultural and industrial uprisings have been sanguinary. In the aftermath of the war, Italy was awash with weapons and proto-military organizations. To this day (though evidence points strongly toward neo-Fascists), it is not certain who carried out the Bologna railway-station massacre in which, on August 2, 1980, eighty-five innocent men and women were slaughtered and some two hundred wounded. At innumerable junctures, furthermore, outright criminality, that of the Mafia, that of Sicilian banditry, impinges on, penetrates the political process.

Moro came to believe that Italy could emerge from social and economic stagnation and the recurrent eventuality of civil war only if the political center broadened its base. This conviction enlisted more than parliamentary strategy. It drew on Aldo Moro's essential Christianity, on his conviction that the ideals of communal justice and of economic and educational progress enshrined in the programs of the left must be incorporated into the conservatism, into the free-enterprise framework, of Christian Democracy. The tactical alliances with the Socialists, which had kept coalition governments in office in the sixties, were no longer sufficient. The awesome step had to be envisaged: that of a meaningful pact with the P.C.I. (the Italian Communist Party). Only thus could a national government founded on genuine democratic principles be hoped for. The "historic compromise" seemed the more feasible as the P.C.I. came under the sophisticated leadership of Enrico Berlinguer, who distanced it from the Stalinist legacy and pledged Italy's continued membership in NATO. For almost twenty months, the Communists abstained, more or less benevolently, in parliament. Then they declared their readiness to participate in a national government; its presentation to parliament was scheduled for March 16, 1978.

Moro's visionary-pragmatic "historic compromise" had provoked bitter enmities. It was opposed by the traditionalists within the Christian Democratic Party. Right-wing elements in both the Vatican and the ecclesiastical network at large regarded Moro's initiative as damnable treason. To ex- and neo-Fascists, the "historic compromise" provided plain proof that Italian parliamentary democracy was merely a front for, a prelude to, a Communist regime. The magnates of banking and private industry angrily held their breath. With ill-disguised arrogance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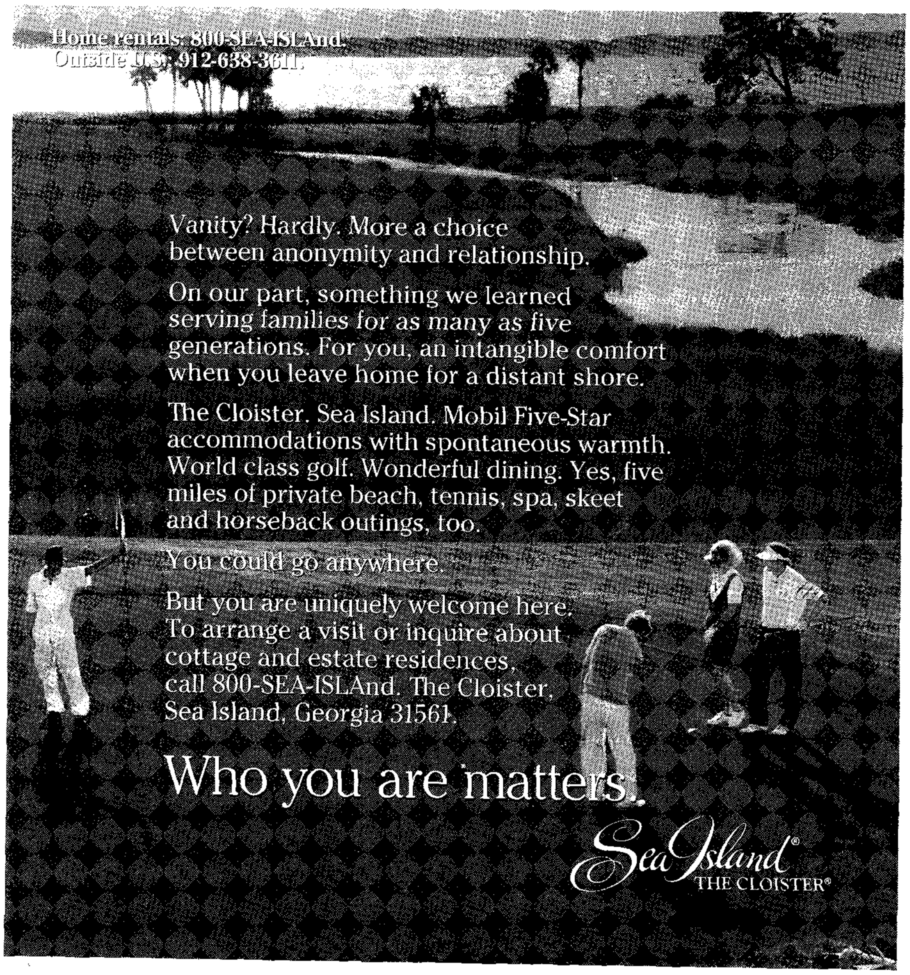
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and myopia, United States foreign policy, even when voiced by an exceptionally educated and perceptive ambassador, saw in the potential C.D.-P.C.I. entente a grave dereliction of Cold War principles and American military priorities in the Mediterranean. And fury came also from the left. Hard-core Communists regarded Berlinguer as an opportunistic turncoat. His pact with Moro was a transparent betrayal of Marxist-Leninist principles. Even further to the left, in the twilight of "direct action," hovered tiny but organized cells of anarchists, Maoists, and deranged vandals or killers set on destabilizing the seemingly fragile fabric of the Italian civil order. To them, Aldo Moro represented the arch-enemy.

Most of what is known about the origin of the Red Brigades in Italy remains anecdotal. Indeed, it emerged in various, sometimes irreconcilable versions during the successive Moro investigations and trials. The first underground covens were formed in the wake of the tumultuous student mutinies and Mao-Che Guevara carnivals throughout Europe in 1968. The organization appears to have consolidated its tactics and gone over to terrorism in the early nineteen-seventies. It recruited from certain factories, schools, and universities. Rather strikingly, it numbered among its planners and house gurus a handful of distinguished intellectuals. Radical chic having proved too feeble a drug, a few mandarins out of the academic-literary intelligentsia found instigations to murder more stimulating. On the rim of the militant core, a bevy of elegant left-wing literati, publishers, and media figures seems to have provided financial support and occasional shelter. There are analogies to terrorism against the czars and to the Black Panthers. Soon the Red Brigades spawned their tawdry jargon: one did not kill or mutilate men and women but only their "functions" within "exploitative C.I.A.-financed managerial imperialism"; and "revolutionary violence" was a necessity imposed by the "institutional violence" of the so-called democratic state, itself merely a mask for "Fascist capitalism." Cells in which kidnap victims were brutally confined and interrogated were "people's prisons" exercising "proletarian justice."

Moro, who, as one of his captors later put it, had been for "at least twenty years the supreme manager of power in Italy," the "demiurge of bourgeois power," was an obvious and prime target. Decisively so at the moment when, by the cunning device of the "historic compromise," he would castrate the Communist Party—already nothing but a stalking-horse for capitalism and the C.I.A.—and despoil the oppressed proletariat of its last hope of power. Moro knew himself to be in extreme peril. He warned his family and immediate circle of the likelihood of catastrophe. During the final weeks, he impressed observers through his almost somnambular fatalism. Could an armored car or the avoidance of a known itinerary from his home on the outskirts of the capital have foiled the Red Brigades' ambush? Probably not. The attack had been too well planned. Volleys poured in from all sides. When they stopped, Moro's five bodyguards lay dead or dying. He himself, badly bruised, was never seen alive again except by his captors.

Could more have been done by a traumatized police to locate the apartment in Rome in which Moro was buried alive? (It was found only after his murder.) The question has been endlessly and acrimoniously debated. Could certain mafiosi elements, on their own terms, have succeeded where the police failed? Above all, were there interests, ranging from the American Embassy to the Masons, from the Andreotti government to military intelligence, that did not regard Moro's fate as altogether a disaster, and did not inspire excessive zeal in those assigned to find and free him? This ugly explanation underlay the profoundly stoic but incensed testimony of Moro's widow, Eleonora. Clear between its guarded lines is the indictment, as Drake writes, "that behind the murder of her husband, at perhaps a remove or two from the assassins themselves, the United States and, by further implication, its proxies in Italy, could be identified through a fairly elementary process of deduction." Aldo Moro had been thrown to the wolves by his own allies and political colleagues.

Could his life have been bought? In classical fashion, the Red Brigades' communiqués had demanded an exchange: thirteen of their imprisoned fighters for Moro. Professor Drake examines the involuted evidence with extreme care. His conclusion, unavoidably conjectural, is that nothing less than the government's total capitulation to blackmail, not even a ransom running to billions of lire, would

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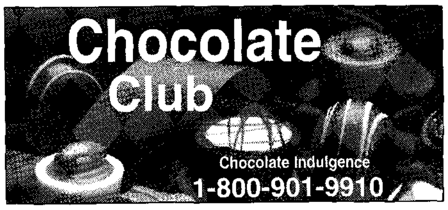

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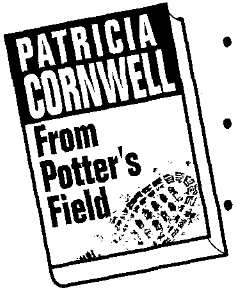
have guaranteed Moro's release. The aim of his kidnappers was to reveal, in the most dramatic and the cruellest light, the weaknesses, the inner factional divisions, not only in the Andreotti government but in Italian society as a whole. Terrorism slays in order to create, through panic, through hysterical responses, a "pre-revolutionary" climate. There may have been moments of tactical hesitation about Moro's fate, but in essence he was doomed from the instant his car was blocked on Via Fani. What occurred during the seven and a half weeks he had left to live, in captivity, at Via Montalcini 8?

The accused, rounded up, separated by cages in the courtroom, fell into three categories: the *pentiti*, eager to furnish state's evidence and proof of their pious change of heart; the *dissociati*, who strove to diminish their own role in Red Brigades activities and distanced themselves from the judicial proceedings; and the *irriducibili*, the unyielding holdouts, who regarded their deeds as fully justified, who gloried in their silence or their declarations of continued war on a criminal society and its judicial lackeys. Already, at the first trial—fifty-eight defendants, ninety-nine sittings, two hundred and forty-four witnesses, and some hundred thousand pages of evidence—the investigating magistrates labored to find out what Moro's conduct in incarceration had been. This line of inquiry was pursued also during the three further trials. Fortunately, perhaps, we still know little. On October 9, 1990, a chance discovery in Milan revealed a Red Brigades cache that included a collection of Moro letters. Together with the letters released during his sequestration, these complicated rather than clarified the issue. (Drake makes almost no use of this admittedly opaque material.) Were they written under duress? Were they to figure in Red Brigades propaganda and disinformation actions? On balance, the mosaic of evidence suggests that Moro behaved superbly. He seems to have defended his political position and personal worth against the arguments and bullying of his captors. He drew, if the uneasy testimony of some of the accused is to be trusted, on reserves of religious strength. At the same time, some of the letters originally disseminated point to deepening anguish. Moro's appeals for help, his clear warnings that his life is at stake, his pleas for negotiations between Andreotti and the kidnappers grow more desperate. Before very long, Aldo Moro realized, in bleak desolation, that nothing efficacious would be undertaken on his behalf, that his extinction served too many high and occult interests.

When the results of the preliminary inquiry for the fourth trial were finally presented, in August, 1990, they named Moro's attackers, the killers of his escort, and the leader of the enterprise, who was also Moro's chief interrogator, one Mario Moretti. Judge Rosario Priore dismissed out of hand the flurry of theories and journalistic "confessions" that related the crime to the government, to the C.I.A., to a notorious Freemasonic Lodge, to the secret services, or to the Mafia. As Professor Drake points out, these sober findings left nagging questions unanswered. Could the famously inefficient, often amateurish Red Brigades really have pulled off this monstrous coup without complicity, however masked, in other quarters? Like that knoll in Dallas, Via Fani seems to keep its final secrets.

Because this book is, quite understandably, a study focussed on legal and institutional history, it fails to emphasize a decisive point: *Italy held.* I am not at all persuaded that any other European democracy would have done so. During those fifty-five days, extremists both on the right (Moro had seen in them the principal menace) and on the left—armed, fanatical in their resolve to destabilize the society—were poised for mayhem. Mutual mistrust and corruption had enfeebled the center and its parliamentary means. A miasma of frustration, of more or less lunatic fantastications (had Mossad doomed Moro in order to avoid any rapprochement between a center-left Italy and Islam?) hung over Rome. Yet the basic structures took the appalling strain and did not buckle. Arrests were made, courts went into session, speech and press debated without censorship. Italian democracy lurched back from nightmare into perennial indigestion.

The sources of this genius for survival are manifold. They comprise that cynicism, that patient irony of sensibility, which informs Italian culture. It is underwritten by Italian regionalism. The writ of Rome hardly obtains in Bologna, in Milan, or in Palermo. There is, in a cru-



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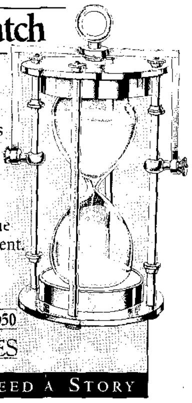

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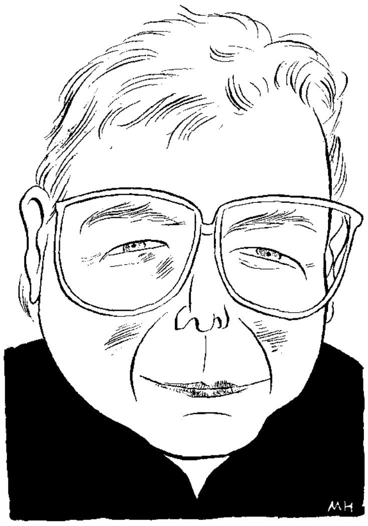
cial sense, no way of paralyzing Italy from any single center. The patchwork of regional autonomies and of linguistic practices (there is no single "Italian"), the historical divisions between a waning Roman Catholicism and radical modes of utopian or managerial socialism insure local stability even in moments of over-all crisis. No ideology trumps the fanaticism enlisted by soccer. At times, these mazelike intricacies of Italian affairs, these irrationalities and parochial priorities render the country next to ungovernable. At other times, they provide a singular safeguard against folly. For better or worse, Italy has, under a legion of governments actually run by a handful of exceedingly adroit and cynical politicians, been one of the stablest societies in the West. And, it may be, the most humane.

The murder of Aldo Moro came near to tearing that society apart. It did not do so. This may be its true significance. There are sunlit days even on Via Caetani. ♦

BEETLEMANIA

A very English obsession with—Volkswagens?

BY ANNA SHAPIRO



Geoff Nicholson

GEOFF NICHOLSON is a British novelist whose work startled American readers into grateful fandom when his books became available here—"Hunters and Gatherers," published by Overlook Press in 1994, and, in 1995, "Everything and More," published by St. Martin's. The latest Nicholson import is "Still Life with Volkswagens" (Overlook; $21.95)—a title that conjures up some of the dopier associations of the late-sixties counterculture, like easy mysticism and a lyrical pseudo-benignity. Nothing, however, could be less Nicholsonian, which is to say sharp, hyper-aware, and comically fatalistic. A writer this intelligent isn't expecting anyone to take the title straight.

Just a look at the chapter headings reveals a compendium of cultural allusions which makes the allusions themselves a joke, from "Gentlemen Prefer Volkswagens" to the assonant "I Beg Your Pardon, I Never Promised You a Volkswagen." These headings are descriptive as well as allusive. "Gentlemen Prefer" actually is about a gentleman, and one who so strongly prefers VWs that almost everything in his elaborate compound—from cigarette lighters to soap—looks like the classic model of this little car. By the end of the book, the title has also accumulated meaning beyond the frivolity of its allusion, and enough emotional velocity to become subtly moving. Yet Nicholson's jokey premise never loses its wit—and for this reader exploding Volkswagens and rampaging skinheads have to be handled *very* cleverly to be funny.

Like the two earlier novels, "Still Life" is a farce about a network of disparate people related only by the most fortuitous of connections. In the first novel, the connecting link was an encyclopedia hawked door to door; in the second, a Harrods-style department store; here, not amazingly, it is Volkswagens. Encyclopedias and department stores are by their nature compendious—a quality shared by ambitious novels. But where a great novel collects and organizes incoherent bits of life, Nicholson, in a sense, lets his characters do the work for him: he writes about grandiosely compendious people, like the author of his encyclopedia, The Books of Power, or the store owner who claims to sell "everything and more." The author has found a way to aspire to such breadth modestly—by mocking, in an affectionate and even wistful manner, grandiose ambition.

The encyclopedic collecting of Volkswagens is certainly not the most obvious, well, vehicle for this kind of weighty freight, but in this case it plays to the sinister side of Nicholson's preoccupation with loosely connected networks of people—the sense that what really connects them is not chance, after all, but some creepily unspecified cosmic conspiracy. Here the conspiracy comes to involve Nazism, but when first articulated—in the opening pages, by a former Tory M.P.—the web is spun solely out of the fatal little car's incidental appearances.

The articulator, Charles Lederer, had been a prominent and respected public figure: "But it all changed when a man in a Volkswagen stole his daughter, slept with his wife, invaded his house, turned the media against him and caused his incarceration." Lederer is in a mental institution. To the reader, he seems wrongfully held and sadly sane for a page or two, but then he produces his scrapbook of world disasters, in which a Volkswagen can be seen in every news photograph. He proposes to his doctor that it is "quite clearly the car of the devil." The doctor, on the other hand, who has taken poor Lederer's habitual propriety to be an act, at this believes that the ex-M.P. is, sanely, putting him on, and kicks him out. Shortly after his release, however, VWs start exploding all over England, and Lederer becomes the prime suspect.

But far from the only one. There's Barry Osgathorpe, the infamous "man in a Volkswagen" who destroyed Lederer's life, though he is now in Zen-induced atonement, and has forsworn driving his souped-up Beetle. There's the posh neo-Nazi, Phelan, who has kidnapped the gentleman collector. And there is Fat Les, "the Veedub King," a world-class customizer who has jazzed up the cars of many other characters who meander in and out of the story. In catering to everyone else's obsessions, Fat Les has become a bit tired of Bugs.

IN direct address to the reader, Nicholson makes it clear that *he* is not tired of Bugs; he confesses that he, too, collects things like Volkswagen mugs and miniatures. His research and brooding, however, yield richer store for the reader. One of the chapters, in which the development of the Bug is compared with the development of the German bomb known as the Doodlebug, is called "Gravity's Volkswagen." Well before I got there, though, shades of Lederer's insanity had begun to descend on me, inducing me to see these innocuous cars as, if not satanic, then ominous, like the ubiquitous sign of the post horn in a different Pynchon novel, "The Crying of Lot 49."

Still, none of this comes up to the level of the very best of Nicholson, such as the encyclopedia excerpts in "Hunters and Gatherers." They run to entries like this, under "Sex":

> A big issue.
> What people do in the privacy of their own mouths is nobody else's business.

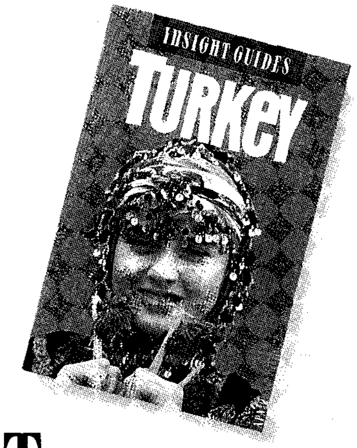
Or this, under "Karl Marx":

> The class struggle, the dictatorship of the proletariat, to each according to his needs, dialectical materialism, surplus value, commodity fetishism, a spectre is haunting Europe, nothing to lose but your chains, the opium of the people, the first time as tragedy, the second time as a sit-com.
> Wasn't keen on the bourgeoisie, but who is?

Nicholson's two earlier books also feature a number of characters to whom, however broadly they've been caricatured, one instantly surrenders sympathy and allegiance. In "Still Life" there is only one such character, and it is the author himself. That said, to express disappointment with "Still Life" is like saying that nothing John Cleese has done comes up to the original Monty Python series—with which these novels share the inspired qualities of genre-crossing skits.

Among his many winning innuendos, Nicholson implies that for women cars are basically boring—and he is right, at least for this one. But then VWs aren't precisely cars here, are they? He compares his miniature-collecting to "being in control of a tiny world," and declares this to be "exactly what a novelist does." Looking at the way he has displayed his collection, he suggests that it makes his apartment a work of art—"a still life with Volkswagens."

It may be a weakness of this novel that the most likable personality is outside the action, but the directness of Nicholson's appeal invites the reader to participate, to become part of the web. Nicholson points out that many people have VW stories. That made me think of my Volkswagen story, which I spent happy minutes mentally rehearsing and embellishing, until the implications of what I was doing struck home. This was beyond the usual readerly urge to identify, I realized. I'd become part of the network: he'd induced me to customize. ♦



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BRIEFLY NOTED

INFINITE JEST, by David Foster Wallace (Little, Brown; $29.95). A mad, elephantine novel of the foreseeable future, two parts of which appeared in this magazine. It is set sometime in the next century, on the grounds of a New England tennis academy and in a rehab clinic. Among other things, the book contains perhaps the most moving and hypnotic writing on the psychology of addiction and recovery to be found in modern fiction. There are obsessive riffs on sports, on drugs, and on the hidden horrors of entertainment: the title of the novel refers to the title of a movie that is said to be so "terminally compelling" that viewers will watch it passively and repeatedly to the point of death. Comparisons with Pynchon are inevitable, and in this case they are fully justified.

THE BRIMSTONE WEDDING, by Barbara Vine (Harmony; $24). A first wedding anniversary is cotton; a second, paper; but the thirteenth, they say, is brimstone. In Ruth Rendell's Inspector Wexford mysteries, an event—usually brutal—spurs an inquiry. When Rendell writes as Barbara Vine, the sequence is reversed: the reader gets to know the criminal eerily well, and the event is, almost, an afterthought. Vine demonstrates just how close premeditation, with its merciless logic, can be to a trance.

AUTOPSY ON AN EMPIRE, by Jack F. Matlock, Jr. (Random House; $35). When Jack Matlock was the American Ambassador in Moscow during the Gorbachev years, he was notoriously closemouthed, and reporters made the mistake of thinking him uninformed. As this new history of the Gorbachev-Yeltsin era makes plain, however, Matlock is a superb diplomat and historian; his is the best literary performance from an ambassador since George Kennan was in the Foreign Service. Its highlights include the way the Russian reformers used Matlock as a conduit to warn Gorbachev of the approaching coup.

GENIUS TALK: CONVERSATIONS WITH NOBEL SCIENTISTS AND OTHER LUMINARIES, by Denis Brian (Plenum; $28.95). Master of the art of the interview, Brian gets his subjects conversing with a lively clarity that makes such recondite topics as cosmology and quantum mechanics approachable. The world of high science resembles an exclusive club whose members are intimate with one another even though they are physically far apart, and who, when they disagree, generally do so with courtesy.

LOVE, LOSS, AND WHAT I WORE, written and illustrated by Ilene Beckerman (Algonquin; $14.95). An autobiography that begins in the forties with the author in her Brownie uniform, this slender book uses the medium of "what I wore"—conveyed in spare words and pictures—to evoke friendships, two marriages, and entire milieus. Ilene's exquisite childhood outfits were all made by her mother, who died when the author was twelve. The lonely poignance of the illustrations makes this original and funny book also excruciatingly sad: never has the love of beautiful clothes seemed less frivolous.

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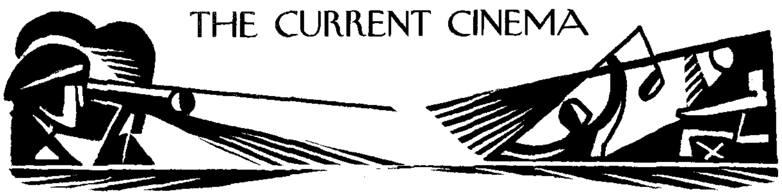
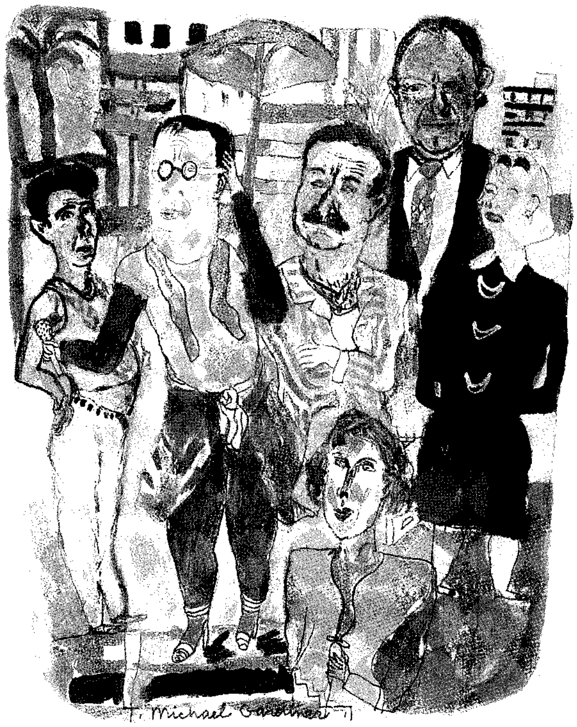


SEEING STRAIGHT

A French farce in American drag, and the ghost of Jean Seberg.

BY TERRENCE RAFFERTY

"THE BIRDCAGE," Mike Nichols's de-luxe remake of the wildly popular 1978 French comedy "La Cage aux Folles," treats its frivolous source with the sort of reverence that was once reserved for the loftiest classics of dramatic literature; the recent films of "Othello" and "Richard III" aren't half as faithful to Shakespeare's plays as "The Birdcage" is to "La Cage aux Folles." In a way, Nichols and his screenwriter, Elaine May, are smart to preserve the structure of the original movie, which was based on a play by Jean Poiret: "La Cage aux Folles" is a complex but surprisingly sturdy piece of laugh-generating machinery, and comedy veterans like Nichols and May know better than to tinker with a perfectly engineered farce plot. The title of "The Birdcage," like that of "La Cage aux Folles," is also the name of a glitzy night club where the main characters, Armand (Robin Williams) and Albert (Nathan Lane), work. They're a middle-aged gay couple, settled and reasonably content, whose relationship mimics the dynamics of a straight marriage. Armand, who manages the club, plays the role of the steady, practical husband; Albert, who performs (as Starina) in the Birdcage's famous drag show, is flamboyant, temperamental, and prone to extravagant mood-swings, from martyred depression to volcanic fits of rage. The crisis that sets the plot in motion is the appearance of Armand's son, Val (Dan Futterman)—the product of his father's sole heterosexual experience—who announces his engagement to a girl from a conservative family and then persuades Armand to disguise his colorful, unconventional ménage as a "respectable" household when the prospective in-laws come to dinner: Armand has to pass for straight, and Albert, for the purposes of this little theatrical production, has to be kept offstage entirely.



"The Birdcage" flock: Hank Azaria, Nathan Lane, Robin Williams, Christine Baranski, Gene Hackman, and Dianne Wiest.

T. MICHAEL GARDINER

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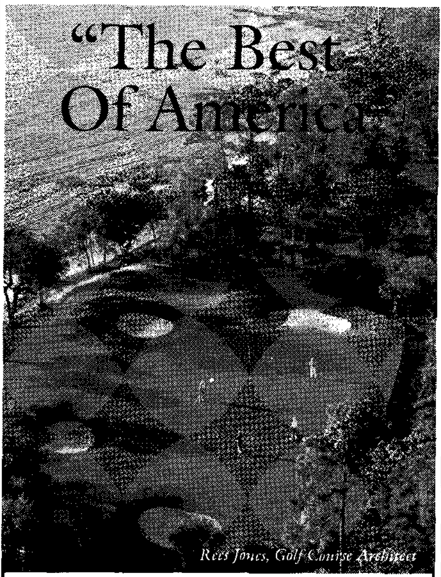

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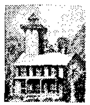

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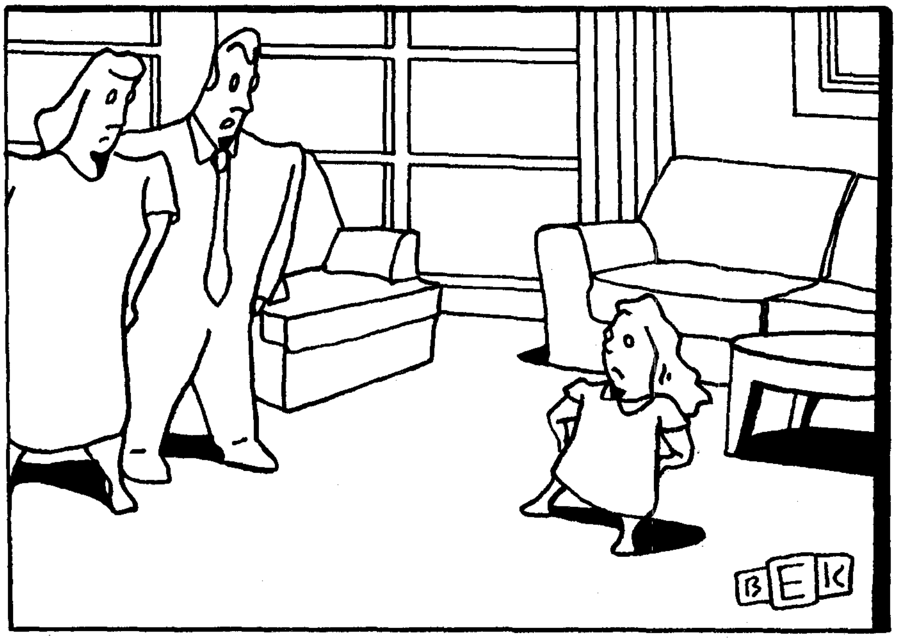
its—to present him as Val's heterosexual bachelor uncle. "The Birdcage" builds, with the barely repressed hysteria that characterizes good farce, to the fateful dinner, at which Albert, unwilling to disappear and unable to feign heterosexuality, decides, unilaterally, on the inevitable solution: in full drag, he sweeps onto the scene as Armand's loving wife. To the audience's delight, the elaborately conceived deception proceeds to break down utterly, in helpless obedience to the entropic principles of farce: where comedy is concerned, there's nothing more satisfying than the spectacle of chaos emerging from order.

"The Birdcage" largely contents itself with decking out what appears to be a profoundly, unalterably French comedy in American drag—changing the locale from Saint-Tropez to Miami's neon-bright, pastel-colored South Beach district, and then hoping that the story, in its cheerful new costume, will still play. It does. But this cautious, sensible approach has the drawback of making the movie feel a little, as the French might say, de trop: since the original was immensely successful here as well as in Europe, and even spawned a long-running Broadway musical, the material isn't exactly obscure, so there's no compelling aesthetic justification for simply trotting it out again and putting it through its familiar, reliable paces, as Nichols and May do. "The Birdcage" is far too accomplished to be considered merely a touring-company version of "La Cage aux Folles," but an aura of secondhandness hovers over the production nevertheless, most noticeably in the performances of Williams and Lane. Although they're both skillful and often extremely funny, the script doesn't give them much room to reinterpret their roles, and distinguish themselves from the memorable characters created by Ugo Tognazzi and Michel Serrault in "La Cage aux Folles."

Williams, like Tognazzi, plays George Burns to his partner's Gracie Allen: his function is to provide a calm, relatively levelheaded presence in the midst of swirling insanity. He gives an admirably subdued performance, and that's probably a greater acting feat for him than it was for the urbane, unflappable Tognazzi: Williams has to marshal all his concentration to achieve effects that his predecessor seemed to toss off effortlessly. Aside from an occasional ad-lib, Williams is allowed to break loose in only one brief scene, in which, directing the club's floor show, Armand tries to stimulate a sullen, uncoöperative performer by demonstrating a few dance moves: in the space of about half a minute, Williams zips through step-perfect parodies of Bob Fosse, Martha Graham, Twyla Tharp, Michael Kidd, and Madonna, and then instructs the young man, "But you keep it all inside." In "The Birdcage," Robin Williams does a beautiful job of becoming Ugo Tognazzi, but the effort forces *him* to keep too much inside.

Lane labors under a different, and perhaps even more onerous, handicap, which is that Michel Serrault's performance in "La Cage aux Folles" is peerlessly, irre-



"Yes, we do have the authority to regulate you."

ducibly original—an improbable mixture of screaming-queen hysteria and haughty, “womanly” dignity, each quality flowing gracefully into the other as if this were the most natural combination in the world. Although Lane has sensational comic timing and plenty of theatrical flair, he's playing a character that is owned outright, and in perpetuity, by another actor; his spirited acting isn't quite enough to get him out from under the imposing, statuesque shadow of Serrault.

The movie's failure to reimagine the two main characters of “La Cage aux Folles” produces one bizarre side effect. With all these eccentric, exotic people drifting through a carnival-like South Beach, “The Birdcage” is stolen by a straighter-than-straight character: Senator Kevin Keeley (Gene Hackman), the prospective father-in-law, who, along with his wife (Dianne Wiest), is the target audience for the gay family's hastily assembled heterosexual improv. The Senator is a brilliant embellishment on the monotonously splenetic conservative politician played by Michel Galubru in “La Cage aux Folles”; it's the one role that has been significantly expanded, and it gives this otherwise pleasant and predictable movie a welcome element of surprise. Keeley is both dimmer and more sincere than his French counterpart: he's a four-square champion of traditional morality, whose reactionary philosophy, it's clear, is directly attributable to a stubborn, intractable intellectual incapacity. He's literally unable to see the world as it is—a quality that enables Armand and Albert to maintain their charade for much longer than its verisimilitude actually warrants, and that also allows him to be utterly disarmed by Albert's outrageous parody of housewifely virtue. You never catch Hackman trying to be funny, but he slyly winds up getting more laughs than anyone else in the picture. The best moment in “The Birdcage”—the one scene that deserves to become a classic—is all his: Keeley's rambling, stupefyingly inarticulate monologue on the beauties of the American landscape. It's a daring piece of comic writing, and Hackman turns it into something sublime: an aria of dullness.

Those who have somehow missed “La Cage aux Folles” in its previous incarnations will probably have a very good time at “The Birdcage.” Those millions of us who are familiar with the original, however, have to watch this picture in the

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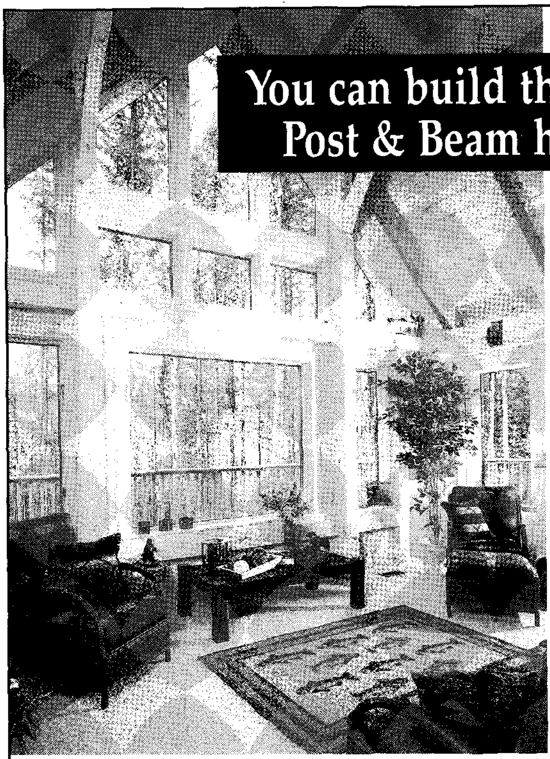

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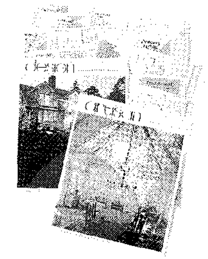

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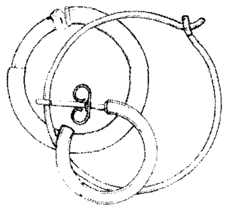

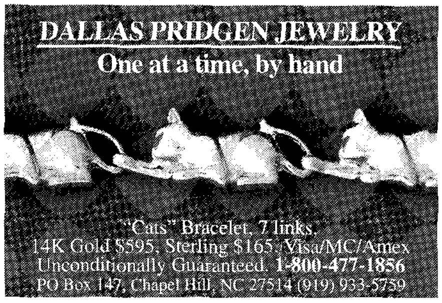

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manner of audiences at the opera or the ballet—responding to that night's performance of an old favorite from the repertory, comparing the new cast to beloved predecessors, and gauging the effect of small variations against a long-established standard of interpretation. It feels a bit strange to have to exercise that sort of connoisseurship in a movie theatre, and, although "The Birdcage" is pretty consistently amusing, you can't help wishing that the filmmakers had been bolder. Nichols and May might have taken a few pointers from drag performers, who, even while they're imitating Marlene Dietrich or Judy Garland, recognize that, no matter how exact their impersonations are, no one's ever going to mistake them for the real thing.

IN Carlos Fuentes's wonderful short novel "Diana," a roman à clef about the author's affair with the actress Jean Seberg, the narrator writes, "I watched my lover sacrifice and discipline herself for a profession in which she didn't believe, in which she didn't see herself, in which she could not even glimpse her future." The novel, which was published in 1995, is set in 1970, a time when Seberg's movie fame was mostly behind her, and she didn't have much future left, either: she died—an apparent suicide—in 1979, at the age of forty. Mark Rappaport's film essay "From the Journals of Jean Seberg" is an imaginary monologue in which the actress (played by Mary Beth Hurt) meditates on her troubled life. Wearing the short blond hairdo that was her trademark, and often dressed in costumes from her youthful roles in Preminger's "Bonjour Tristesse" (1958) and Godard's "Breathless" (1959), Rappaport's Seberg provides a running commentary on a selection of clips and stills illustrating her erratic, puzzling, almost accidental career; from beyond the grave, she seems to be trying to find a way of seeing herself in her screen image—to be searching for the perspective that eluded her during her brief life.

As in Rappaport's earlier anthology/soliloquy film, "Rock Hudson's Home Movies" (1992), the narrator's point of view is detached, ironic, intellectualized; both pictures shuttle freely between the facts of the subjects' biographies and the fictions of their movies, identifying parallels, contrasts, and hidden connections. But, although the technique of "From the Journals of Jean Seberg" is similar to that of Rappaport's Rock Hudson movie, the effect of the new film is vastly different: this picture has a haunted, melancholy undertone that seems entirely specific to its subject. It's significant that, while Rappaport selected a young actor, Eric Farr, to portray his Rock Hudson, he has chosen for his Jean Seberg an actress in her forties—that is, older than Seberg ever got to be. Farr plays Hudson as he was (or might have been) in life, as the gay man gazing skeptically at his heterosexual movie persona: he represents the secret, alternative "Rock Hudson" that was a constant presence in the star's life—the other half of a painfully divided consciousness. Jean Seberg, however, appears to have lived and worked in a persistent fog of half awareness, casting about for a way to take control of a desperately confused self but always failing. "From the Journals of Jean Seberg" is the story of a woman whose experience unfolds as a succession of identities defined by others: by Preminger, who plucked her, as a teenager, from a small town in Iowa and handed her the title role in his 1957 "Saint Joan" (which proved to be a disaster); by Godard, whose "Breathless" turned her into an ambiguous icon of youth, freedom, and destructive American innocence; by Romain Gary, a French novelist and filmmaker, who was her second husband and who cast her in degrading roles in his justly forgotten movies; and by Hoover's F.B.I., which smeared her as a degenerate to punish her for her political and sexual involvement with Black Panthers.

Seberg was, in a sense, always more acted upon than acting. What is moving about Rappaport's film is that the Seberg of his imagination is a ghost, bitterly aware that the smart ideas she's reeling off never occurred to her during her time on earth. Hurt's superb readings incorporate a faint echo of the thin, high, girlish voice that Seberg had in her early pictures, but there's also something flat and weary in her tone—a hint of cynicism about the value of her posthumous understanding. Hurt looks straight into the camera, as Seberg did in "Breathless" and "Bonjour Tristesse," and her stare is steely, wised-up, and infinitely remote. Seeing herself, Seberg seems to know that the clear image she's looking at is still a kind of illusion: a trick of time and distance, like the cold, useless light of a dead star. ◆

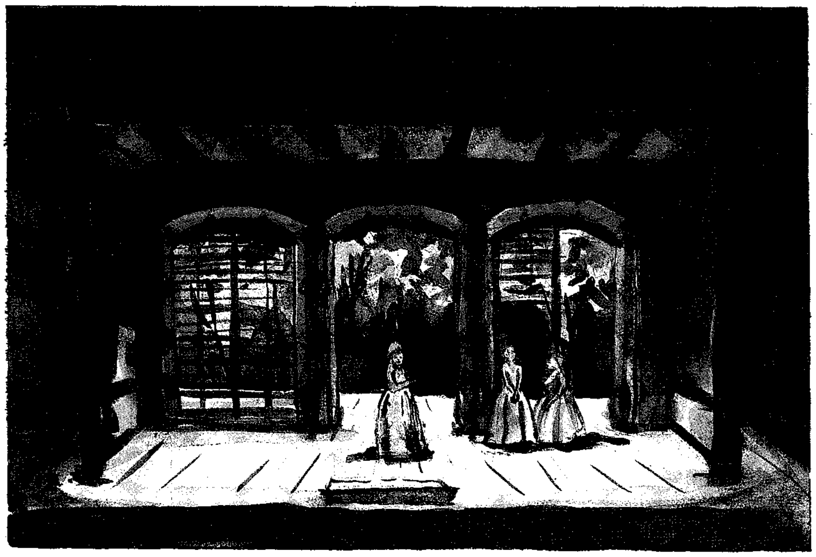
MUSICAL EVENTS

THE NEW METROPOLITANS

The Met unveils productions of Verdi and Mozart operas.

BY PAUL GRIFFITHS

ST. PETERSBURG was as far from home as Verdi travelled, and the opera he wrote for that city, "La Forza del Destino," has a lot to say about exile. Part of its message comes, as James Levine and his musicians wonderfully display throughout the new Met production, in the quality of the orchestral music, which moves away from anything noisy or ordinary, as if trekking off toward polish. Verdi presumably had plenty of opportunity to hear the orchestra of the Imperial Theatre before he completed his score, in 1862, and presumably this prior experience accounts for much of what's special about "Forza": the refinement, the lack of weight and splash, the engraving of expression, the superb long instrumental melodies. Mr. Levine and his players make it all song and fine gesture, represented by the clarinet solo at the start of the third act—grandly and nobly phrased, with an almost flutelike purity of tone—and by the impellent drumming in the finale. But the drama begins in the overture, and, since this was added for the 1869 revision, Verdi must have been responding here not to his personnel but to his work. The "force of destiny" is a musical idea. It's the abrasion of urgency on repose, and it's figured for us first of all in the overture, in the assault of repetitive music—which not only symbolizes but realizes the call of progress, in being beat-driven and in marking time through its iterations—on cantabile melody. The insistent circlings can belong only to the orchestra; the tunes are evidently meant to be sung. And so the orchestra sets up a demand that it will reinforce in not very subtle fashion at the first turning point in the drama (the reappearance of Leonora's father to confront her nocturnal visitor, Alvaro) and again at the start of the last scene, and which it will imply all through: the demand for control.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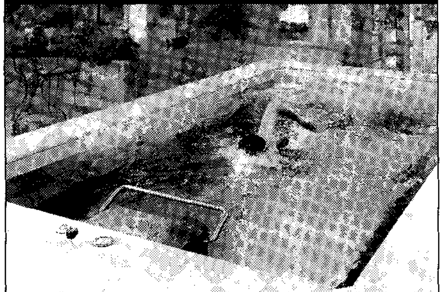
Michael Yeargan's set for Act II of "Così Fan Tutte."

That's why the libretto has to be such a mess. If one looks for justification of the title in the text, one's bound for disappointment. Nowhere is it explained why Leonora and Alvaro, on the point of leaving together at the end of Act I, should become separated, or why Alvaro should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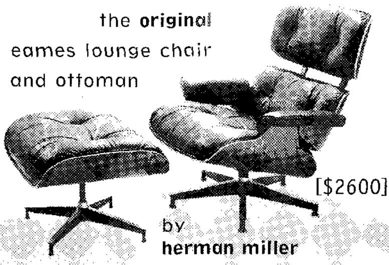
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soon afterward believe Leonora dead. Far from being forced by fate, these people are condemned to an unmotivated wandering, and Leonora's brother Carlo—though having the motive of revenge for an affront to family honor—necessarily wanders with them. The whole opera is a protracted, dislocated prelude to the moment when its three central characters finally meet, and the further irony of the title is that Verdi had second thoughts about what should happen then. Should all three die, in a rapid fall of bodies (which early audiences seem to have found more gross than ridiculous), to be followed by a choral prayer, or should Alvaro survive and the opera end more intimately?

Mr. Levine's choice—the 1869 version but with the 1862 order for the third act—allows him to end that act with the focus on Alvaro, which is where anyone would want it when Plácido Domingo is singing the part. His interpretation is keen. The sound is dark and taut; its gleam is the gleam on old wood, and Mr. Domingo's vocal joinery is as expert as ever, the phrases integral and the ornaments fitted in justly. There must be a word in Spanish for the robust yet aristocratic distaste he conveys—not only in this role but especially and rightly in this role. His Alvaro is a man who is trying to conduct himself with dignity through a world without scruples—a world that will buffet him from palace to battlefield and on to monastery without any satisfactory logic, and in which the people he's closest to will either be removed from him without cause or be present in disguise. It's a world in which time and place, as measured by words, have lost their grip, and the characters, inasmuch as they're made by words, have lost themselves, preserving only, but crucially, what's defined for them by music—their emotional core. Mr. Domingo's Alvaro is this: not Alvaro at all but a nameless one who has to behave as if he were Alvaro, in situations in which he has been suddenly and inexplicably inserted, at the behest of the music. Music, in this most experimental of Verdi's operas, takes off on its own. We can see no reason for what happens, but we can hear every reason.

One can imagine ways in which a production might connect with the work's rootlessness, its disesteem of consequence in drama or location, by providing settings and actions to suggest the dangerous insubstantiality of nightmare. There could be nothing onstage but mist or a labyrinth. Duets could be duets of search rather than of arrival together. Religious retreat, to which both Alvaro and Leonora resort, could be shown as an almost autistic reaction to a prevailing unanswerability in the universe.

It was not, of course, in order to explore such possibilities of stagecraft that Giancarlo del Monaco became the Met's director of choice in the Italian repertory, and yet his production does—thanks to its monumentally stagy décor, by Michael Scott, and to its calm failure to be surprised by anything the scenario can throw at it—amount to one huge alienation effect. At the start, Mr. del Monaco and Mr. Scott seem to be playing a more sophisticated game, for the initial couple of sets are presented boxed and tidy. But then the production team—including the lighting designer, Gil Wechsler—defiantly throws caution to the winds. We get a wide wall of fake tombs, a candlelit Franciscan church interior that comes sliding forward, a battlefield of tree stumps and feeble fireworks, and a spread hand of towering ruins as container for the second ebullient scene with Preziosilla and her varied entourage. This is all nonsense, of course, but in being nonsense it makes no claim to be embodying the real action of the piece, and thereby serves the opera admirably. There's a moment, too, in the first church scene, when the set is used to create a striking acoustic effect, that of the chorus lying face down and singing into the floor.

Altogether, "Forza" comes boldly across as a drama in which some of the characters—those going under the names of Leonora, Alvaro, and Carlo—are never where they hope to be, while others, including most notably Preziosilla, would never think of being anywhere but where they are. That could define the difference between tragedy and comedy, and Verdi's alternation of the two (which is another experimental feature of the work, perhaps contingent on the first) is excellently maneuvered, as it must be, by Mr. Levine and the orchestra, who make fifes and jingles as demanding of our interest as suavity and catastrophe. It also helps to have a decorous Preziosilla in Gloria Scalchi, who suggests the untamed by means of strong white tone—particularly in the second act, where her interlacing with Sharon Sweet's Leonora is startling for clarity and contrast—rather than by posturing.

Ms. Sweet had some problems in the first act on opening night, when there was a tendency to howl above the break, but later she was beautifully consistent and consistently beautiful: the fault was then, perhaps, of too little change in the radiance, but it was a fault one could bear. Her costuming in the trousers scene was sympathetic. As Carlo, completing the triangle, Vladimir Chernov was a singing muscle: fit, bang on the note, nothing wasted. He, too, lacks something in variety of color: everything has a gray, slightly choked feel to it. But he's an effective performer, as vigorous and trim in his movement as in his singing. Another fine performance came from Roberto Scandiuzzi, who sang the Padre Guardiano with the inevitable gravity but also with grace, the brief notes feathered into the line. Bruno Pola was the nicely greasy Melitone; Michel Sénéchal gave a veteran's show of health as Trabuco.

THERE'S less to be said for the Met's and Mr. Levine's other recent new production, of "Così Fan Tutte," for reasons that have to do principally with the scale of the house. Among the cast, only Thomas Allen, as Don Alfonso, was able to squeak nifty bits of accentuation or tone across the wide spaces, and only Carol Vaness, as Fiordiligi, could come up with a grand-opera vocal splendor to compensate for the impossibility here of the intimacy the piece needs.

Lesley Koenig's staging did not astonish, but she did have the forethought to provide a big entrance for Cecilia Bartoli, who was making her house début, as Despina: she came on pulling the set for her kitchen behind her. It was a somewhat peasanty kitchen, but then hers was a somewhat peasanty performance: full of character, but of the vocal character Ms. Bartoli has created for herself—invitingly confiding and seemingly artless except for a tantalizing hint of malice somewhere around the corner—rather than an imagining of someone else. ♦

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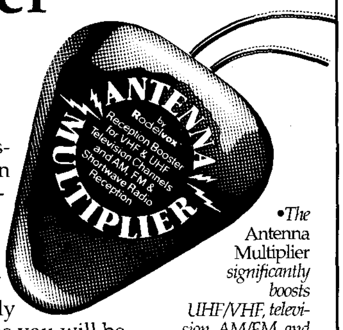
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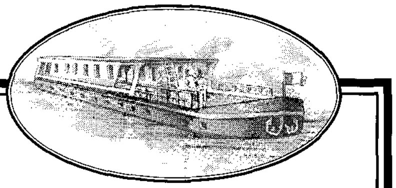

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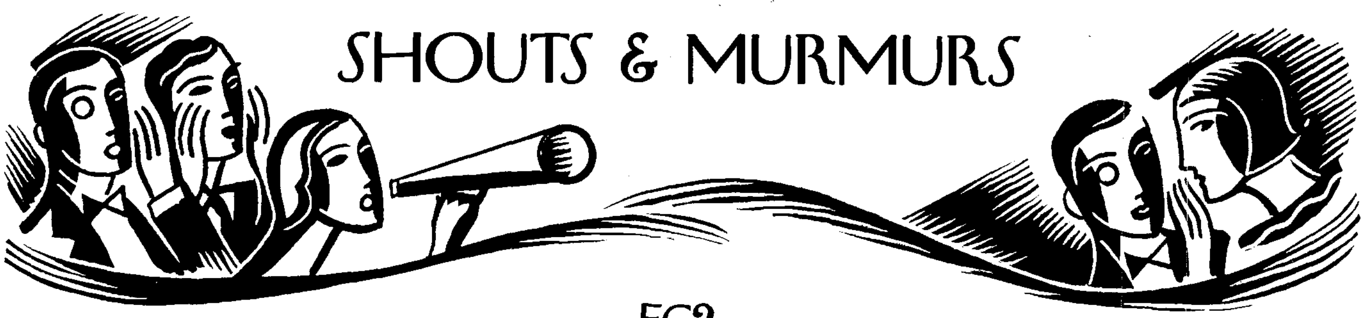


SHOUTS & MURMURS

FC2

BY JONATHAN FRANZEN

A FEW weeks ago, on a snowy Friday afternoon, I was avoiding writing by reading "David Copperfield" when someone buzzed my apartment from the street. Came a voice through my intercom: "Package for Jonathan Franzen from FC2!"

The person I met when I went downstairs wasn't the usual dreadlocked messenger but a well-shaven man with the black wool overcoat and black leather briefcase of a lower-echelon bond-trader. When I took the package from him, he gave me a curiously *apprised* kind of smile and made a Dickensian gesture of doffing his hat, though he wasn't wearing a hat. He seemed unsettlingly intent on making eye contact with me. I thanked him, and without saying a word he disappeared into the snow, which was blowing almost horizontally.

The package he'd handed me was a plain manila envelope containing what felt like a book. On it were scrawled my name and as much of my address as is printed in the White Pages: no apartment number, no Zip Code. For a return address, it bore only the initials "FC2." As I was about to pop the clasp on the envelope, I stopped to wonder, Who is FC2? Back in October, I'd been asked to write the first installment of "The Fifth Column," a "collaborative serial novel" for *The Village Voice*, and I'd chosen as a narrator a woman named Una—a former Miss Ohio with a penchant for explosive devices and Jiffy-Pak mailers. If the Unabomber happened to read *The Village Voice* and happened not to have a sense of humor, I would probably be the first victim on his hit list.

Now it occurred to me that the Unabomber had conducted some of his actions under the name "FC," which is thought to be an abbreviation of "Fuck Computers." Since the bomber had promised last fall to stop killing people, I reasoned that the next round of attacks would naturally come from a successor group: FC2? A numbing, evil ether—the aura of a tightly coiled violence—soaked into my hands as I examined the package more carefully. The envelope wasn't sealed but merely secured with the metal hasp; it almost begged to be opened. And if the bomber had been willing to make eye contact with me, I thought, how confident he must be in the power of his explosive charge to kill me: it would have to be two pounds of pure plastic.

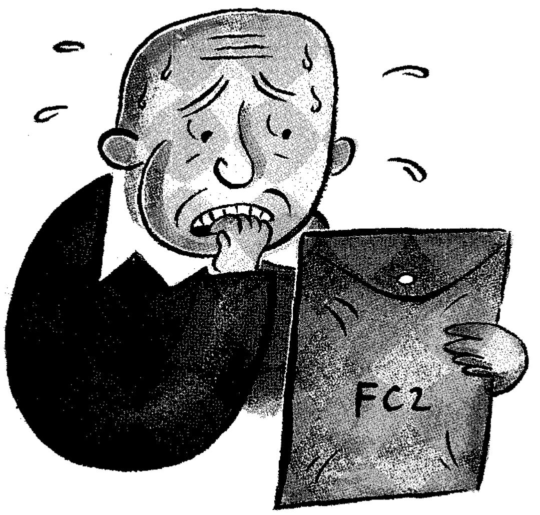
I considered calling the police. I considered putting on my leather mittens and my swimmers' goggles and attempting to nudge the package open from a distance, perhaps employing the metal extension wands of my Electrolux. Instead, I went upstairs and called my agent (who is given to saying, "I love the Unabomber!") and asked her if the initials "FC2" rang a bell. I explained that I'd got this package and that it felt like an ordinary book, but I wasn't expecting any books and—

"Don't open it!" she shouted. In the background, I could hear her dog start to keen with anxiety.

Only at this point did I remember a telephone call I'd received earlier in the week from an unctuously articulate publicist who was hoping to enlist me in his promotion of a new experimental novel. I hadn't caught the name of the publisher, but I did recall the publicist's description of the book (which was blurbed by Richard Powers and won a contest judged by William T. Vollmann) as a "post-Pynchonian" novel about ecology and the decline of communitarianism at the fin de siècle.

The risk now seemed acceptably low, and it strengthens a person's sense of competence and rationality to resign himself to a risk like that. No sooner had I resigned myself, however, than I thought, *How diabolical!* What better Trojan horse with which to kill a writer than a book he was expecting? And what better way for an ecoterrorist to disarm me than by dropping the names of Powers and Vollmann—two of my classmates in the Neo-Furrowed-Browist school of American fiction?

With my agent listening on the telephone, I went into my kitchen (why does a kitchen seem like the natural place to deal with an unexploded bomb?) and cautiously opened the envelope. Inside it I found a book called "The Lost Scrapbook," which had been published by FC2 (formerly the Fiction Collective) in Normal, Illinois, and sent to me with a gnomic comment from its publicist: "The oversoul speaks." What strange brand of hope had allowed me to believe that "The Fifth Column"—a collaborative novel that in the centrifugal discord of its later chapters has become a perfect illustration of communitarianism's failure—could provoke the Unabomber? I was left with a yellow-and-lavender copy of "The Lost Scrapbook," to which adhered, like a nostalgia, those moments when a book had seemed to me potentially explosive. ♦



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